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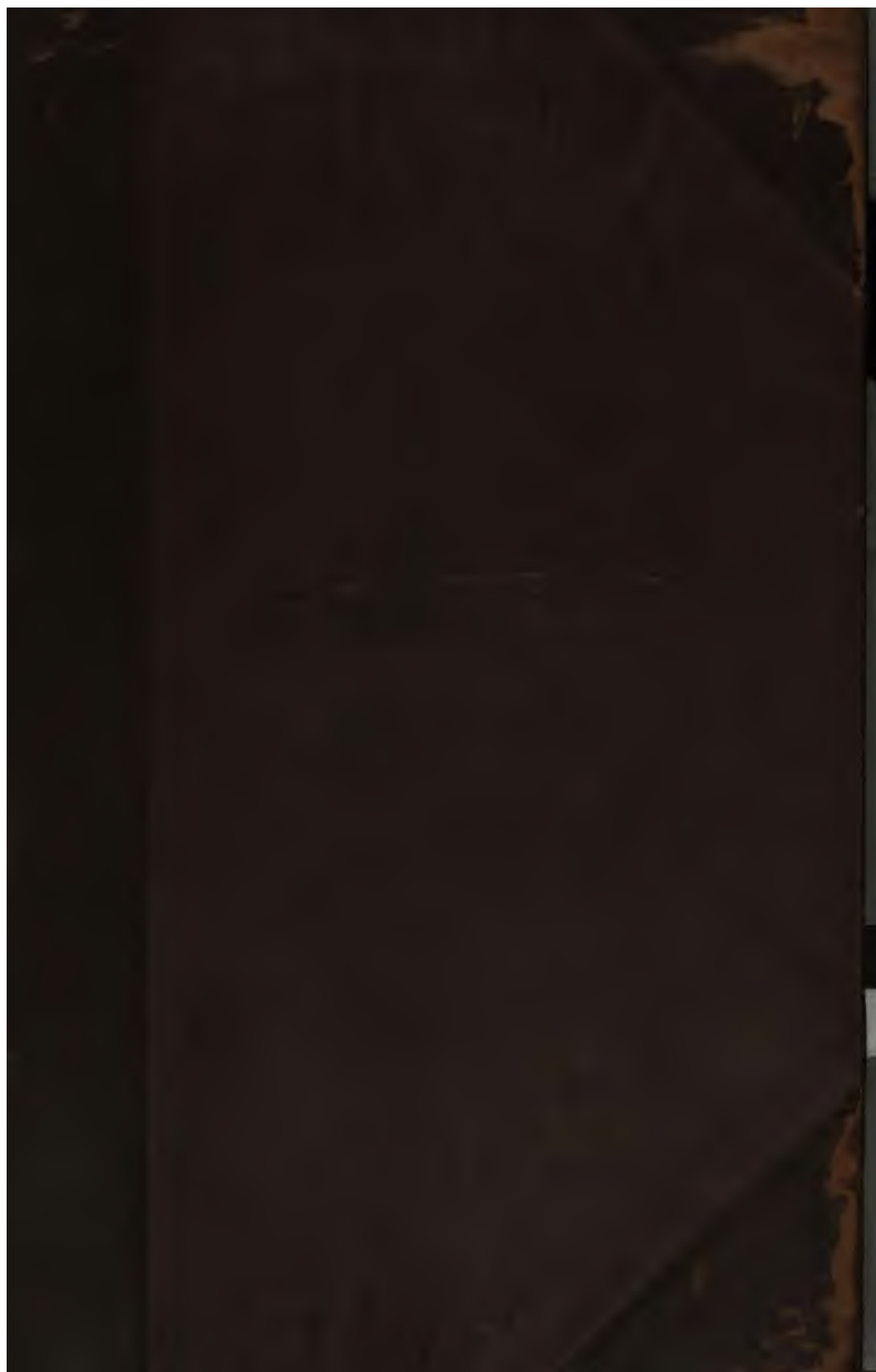
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LECTURES  
DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL  
ON THE  
EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL  
TO THE  
ROMANS.



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Οὗτοι δὲ ἦσαν ἐγγίστεροι τῶν ἐν Θισσαλονίᾳ, οἵτινες ἰδίξαντο τὸν λόγον  
μετὰ πάσης προθυμίας, τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν ἀνακρίνοντες τὰς γραφάς, εἰ ἔχει  
ταῦτα οὕτως.—Acts, c. xvii. v. 11.

Μετὰ τ' ἀλήθεια βίβαια, καὶ τ' ἄριστα αἰώνια.—PLAT.

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH;  
AND T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.

M.DCCC.XXXVIII.

835.



PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY, PAUL'S WALK, EDINBURGH.

## PREFACE.

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It is, in the Christian world, on all hands allowed, that the epistle of the apostle Paul to the Romans contains a perfect and inestimable account of the gospel dispensation. Yet, is that epistle, in its most important parts, often greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. The chief causes of this are, inadvertence to the immediate and precise design of the apostle, in writing the epistle, inattention to the erroneous expectations of the generality of the Jews, in regard to the character of the expected Messiah, and to their prejudices, in respect to the nature of his kingdom, misconception of the real nature of the objections urged, by that blinded people, against the gospel, and of the replies of the apostle, a consequent misapprehension of the most important words and terms used by the apostle, and the assigning to

those words and terms a meaning very different from that, which he intended.

The following Lectures are the result of a close and constant study of the epistle, during many years, and have been composed, not for any particular congregation, but for the general use of the Christian public. The author is fully conscious, that, divesting himself of all manner of prepossession and undue bias, he has endeavoured to ascertain, and to give, the true meaning of the apostle, by the most careful, persevering, and candid, critical examination of his words, in the language, in which he wrote. He has, of course, attentively and diligently perused the most approved critics, commentators, and other writers, on the epistle; and, while he has seen the clearest and most convincing reasons for deviating from the opinions of some authors of name and weight, he has the satisfaction to think, that, on all essential points, he agrees with the most learned, able, and candid, writers on the epistle, ancient and modern, that the Christian Church has produced. He has the testimony of his heart, that his motive, in composing and publishing the Lectures, is, the good of the Christian public; whose present edifica-

tion, sanctification, and comfort, and whose eternal salvation, felicity, and glory, he fervently prays, and humbly hopes they may, by the divine blessing, promote. He chooses to omit prefixing his name to the Lectures ;—a circumstance, which, if they possess intrinsic merit, ought not to affect their usefulness ; and he most humbly and respectfully dedicates them to all sincere, candid, and intelligent, Christians, of whatever denomination.

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## LECTURE I.

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### ROMANS, I. 1-17.

THE inscription of this inestimable epistle is, not merely what custom rendered that part of a letter,—a form of salutation and compliment. It is more. The apostle consecrates it to the purposes of edification. It is a prayer, breathing fervent devotion and love. We find, in the inscription, the once supercilious Pharisee,—the once determined enemy and persecutor of Christ and his disciples,—now readily and openly declaring himself, the devoted bondman of his divine Lord. In this he furnishes a bright example of profound humility, to all, who through the mercy of God, may be arrested, in a rash career of opposition to his will, and brought to see their error, folly, and sin; and, richly endowed, as he was, with transcendent natural talents, as well as with the supernatural gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, he affords an example of the same cardinal virtue to all Christians, however excellent, and especially to the ministers of the gospel, however eminently qualified.

But, although this eminent man gloried in being the humble bondman of Christ, it was, in all respects, proper and necessary for him, in this inscription, to announce himself, by his proper designation,—“ as called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” While he was yet breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, Christ himself appeared to him, in a manner too effectual, to allow him any longer to doubt, that he was blindly fighting against God. He was divinely apprized, that he was chosen, to be a messenger, to bear the happy tidings of the salvation of God to men, and especially to the Gentile world. He received his knowledge of the gospel, by immediate revelation, from its divine author ; and he was, not only himself plentifully endowed, with the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, but was also enabled to confer them on others. These gifts and powers were his credentials, —the unquestionable signs of his being indeed an apostle. Justly, then, may we expect, to find, in his recorded discourses, and in his own epistles, a full and clear account of the nature of the gospel.

But, it ought to be particularly observed, that the history, discourses, and epistles of this apostle, have, in the judgment of every well informed Christian, always afforded the clearest evidence of the truth of the gospel. To the candid and close study of these, therefore, it is the wisdom and the duty of those, who may entertain doubts of the truth of the gospel,

to have recourse. If they do so, the result cannot fail to be satisfactory. The history, which we have of this apostle, as well as his own epistles, are unquestionably genuine; and there is, between them, a wonderful, yet manifestly undesigned, coincidence. The miracles, which he performed, were very numerous, diversified, and matter of public notoriety. In his epistles, he refers and appeals to them, as being so; and, had they not been really performed, his references and appeals, instead of promoting his views, could not fail to be the subject of ridicule. His great success every where in making converts, not only among the lower orders, but sometimes also among the intelligent and learned, can be accounted for, only on the supposition of the reality of his miracles, and the truth of what he taught. In a word, the history of this eminent man, and his own epistles, possess such genuine characteristics of truth and reality, that the candid and attentive perusal of them, cannot fail to produce a conviction, that the gospel is indeed from God.

The gospel is here alluded to, in terms very appropriate and emphatical. The tidings, which it has brought, are great and joyful. It has proclaimed peace on earth, and good will to the children of men, as well as glory to God, in the highest. In this happy dispensation, God, the Father of mercies, is reconciling to himself the world, not imputing to them their trespasses; and the apostle and his fellow-



ambassadors were commissioned and commanded to declare and to testify to all the Gentiles, that their heavenly Father, from whom they had long been estranged and alienated, not only permitted but beseeched them, to be reconciled to him, and that the fruit of reconciliation will be eternal life, glory, honour, and peace.

This gospel, the apostle observes, is “concerning the Son of God our Lord, Jesus Christ.” The Son of God was the great agent, in effecting the reconciliation. He became “the propitiation for our sins,” —“for the sins of the whole world.”—Though “he knew no sin,” he was “made sin,”—a sin-offering, —“for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God, in him.” By his obedience unto death, he has purchased for us life and immortality. This, especially to us Gentiles, “who were dead in trespasses and sins,” and who “were without hope, and without God, in the world,” is *gospel* indeed. These are, *indeed*, great and joyful tidings, and worthy of the God of love, who sent them to us.

The epistle is addressed, “to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.” In these words, the apostle clearly means, all those, in Rome, who believed, that God the Father had raised his son Jesus Christ from the dead, and who had received him, as their Lord. All such he permitted to regard themselves, as the objects of the love of God,—called and consecrated as his people, in the new covenant of the

gospel,—the covenant of grace. For them, he prayed for “ grace and peace, from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

We have now considered the direct part of the inscription of this epistle. There are other things in it, parenthetically introduced, which demand our attention. The apostle observes, that “ God had promised” the dispensation of the gospel “ afore, by his prophets, in the Holy Scriptures.” The effect, produced by the predictions, relative to this dispensation, in the Holy Scriptures, was very powerful. At the time of our Lord’s appearance, the expectation of his advent and reign was intense. The twelve tribes of Israel, intently serving God, day and night, sanguinely hoped, and eagerly desired, to see this, their fondest hope, speedily realized.

The apostle also observes, that our Lord was descended “ from David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The public records of the Jews, kept as they were, with the most religious care, made it clear and unquestionable, that our Lord sprung from David; and accordingly this was never questioned. The miracles, performed by our Lord, were very numerous, diversified, and great, and, although absurdly, as well as wickedly, ascribed, by his enemies, to the co-operation of evil spirits, were never denied to be real; and these miracles, accompanied as they were, by

doctrines evidently divine, and enforced by matchless eloquence, were highly calculated to convince men, that Jesus was the expected Messiah, the Son of God. These proofs, accordingly, did fully convince the apostles and many others, of this important truth. But, it is the resurrection of our Lord, from the dead, that the apostle adduces, as the leading, irresistible, and triumphant, proof, that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. For his resurrection was, in itself, a stupendous miracle; and it was, besides, the fulfilment of a prophecy;—the Holy Spirit had, in the Scriptures, predicted, that it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again, from the dead.

In relation to the gospel dispensation, God the Father gave to his Son all power and authority, and, as the Father sent the Son, so the Son sent his apostles, to invite and to entreat all nations, without distinction, to embrace the gospel; and the invitation was grounded on the redemption, that was in Christ, the divine, universal, mediator, between God and men, who gave himself a ransom for all. Here, accordingly, the great apostle of the Gentiles assures the Christians at Rome, that they too were of those Gentiles, who were invited, and received, by Christ, as fellow-citizens with the saints, and to be of the household of God. “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith, among all nations, for his name; among whom are ye also called of Jesus Christ.” This was edifying and

cheering, indeed, to those Gentile Christians, who had so recently been delivered from the power of darkness, made meet to be partakers of the saints, in light, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son,\* who, in their heathen state, had, by the ancient people of God, always been classed with the most notorious and odious sinners, who, by that blinded people, were still contemned, hated, and shunned, and who, indeed, in their heathen state, and in respect to the covenant, enjoyed by his peculiar people, had always been regarded, by God himself, as strangers and foreigners; and it is equally edifying, and equally cheering to every Christianized people, whose forefathers were once blinded Gentiles, dead in trespasses and sins, without hope, and without God, in the world.

Thus, in the inscription itself of this epistle, we have a brief summary of the gospel,—a summary, not only valuable in itself, but also well calculated to guide and assist us, in the proper explication of the whole epistle.

The words, in which the apostle commences his discourse, on the important subjects, contained, in the epistle, are solemn, devout, and impressive. "First I thank my God, through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of, throughout the whole world." Deeply sensible of the unspeakable value of the salvation, of which the Christians, at

\* Col. i. 13.

Rome, had become the heirs, the apostle gives fervent thanks to God, on their account; and this he does, in the manner, in which all Christians, ought, for every good, and especially, for every Christian blessing, to praise God,—“through Christ.” But, there was another consideration, of the most powerful nature, which made his heart glow with gratitude. Their conversion to the gospel was well known, and spoken of throughout the whole empire,—the whole known world; and, in this, he clearly saw, in progress, the fulfilment of that prophecy, which announced, that the day should come, when the whole earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord. He clearly perceived, in it, the vigorous shooting of that grain of seed, most diminutive though it was, which, once committed to the ground, was destined ultimately to become the greatest of all herbs.

The gospel must have found its way, to Rome, at a very early period. On the memorable day of Pentecost, when the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit were imparted to the disciples of Christ, there were at Jerusalem from every nation under heaven devout Jews, who had gone thither, doubtless for religious purposes. Many of these, upon miraculously hearing, each in his own language, the wonderful works of God, were converted to Christ, among whom, in all probability, there were some of those “strangers of Rome,—Jews and proselytes,”—who were present, that, on

their return, must have brought their new religion along with them. From this period, to the time, in which the apostle wrote this epistle, there had elapsed twenty-five years ; and from the time of the apostle's conversion, to the same period, twenty. Now, to the Christians at Rome, the capital of the world, it might have been matter of wonder,—perhaps of dissatisfaction,—that that apostle, the special purpose of whose mission was to open the eyes of the Gentiles, and to confer upon them the unspeakable riches of Christ, should not, during all that time, have visited them ; while his apostolic labours were so extensively and so successfully bestowed on other Gentile churches. Some apology, then,—at the least, some explanation of this,—was now to be expected ; and, accordingly, the apostle does, in the fullest and kindest manner, apologize. “ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his son, that without ceasing, I make mention of you always, in my prayers, making request, if by any means, now at length, I might have a prosperous journey, by the will of God, to come to you.”

Having, thus, kindly and solemnly assured this church, that they were ever present in his mind, and that he was, without ceasing, earnestly praying to God, that it might be his will to enable him to visit them, the apostle mentions the purpose, for which he wished to visit them. “ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift,

to the end you may be established." It does not appear, that they had hitherto been visited by an apostle; and, on this account, they might but sparingly have enjoyed the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit; and it is very evident, that the possession of those gifts and powers, in abundance, would be highly calculated to confirm them, in their faith.

The natural and genuine fruit of true, and firm, Christian faith is comfort,—“the peace of God, that passeth all understanding,”—“joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Accordingly, the apostle here adds, that confirmation in the faith of the gospel and comfort are virtually the same. “That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith, both of you and me.” That kind of faith, which enabled this apostle, as well as others, in the apostolic age, to impart the gifts and powers, of the Holy Spirit, would be the effectual and happy means of comforting this church, as well as of confirming their general faith; and this would be a cause of great comfort also to the apostle. The comfort of either party, like their faith, would be mutual.

But here it ought to be observed, that the miraculous gifts and powers, which were enjoyed, by the Gentile churches, in the apostolic age, were also intended to confirm and to comfort all the Gentile churches, in all future ages. The possession of those gifts and powers were, to the original Gentile churches, the sign and seal of their adoption, as the people

of God, in the present state, and the earnest of eternal life, in the state to come. Now, they were our representatives ; and the sign, seal, and earnest, with which they were blessed, were divinely intended to serve as such, to all future Gentile Christians. This became very evident even to the Jewish Christian Church, at Jerusalem, strongly prejudiced, though they were, against the gracious purpose of God, in respect to the Gentiles. When the apostle Peter informed them, that the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit were, by his ministry, conferred on the Gentile Centurion, Cornelius, and on his Gentile family and friends, “ they glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Thus, then, is matter of the greatest gratitude to every one of us, Christianized Gentiles, who trusts in the Lord Jesus, and serves him in sincerity.

We here find the apostle anxious to assure the Roman Christians, that his love and concern for them was no new thing. “ Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that often times I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto.” The cause of the detention he explains towards the end of the epistle. “ So have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named ; lest I should build on another man’s foundation ; but as it is written,\* To whom he was not spoken of they shall see ; and

\* Isaiah, lii. 15.



they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered, from coming to you.”\* This explanation could not fail to have been entirely satisfactory to this church. Again, too, he declares the purpose, for which he so earnestly desired to visit them. It was, “that he might have some fruit among them, also, even as among other Gentiles;” and, by this fruit, he must have meant, not merely the confirmation and comfort, but also, the increase of the church, by the conversion of as many as possible of both Jews and Gentiles. For, we know, that, when at length, he did get to Rome, he lost no time, in commencing to preach the gospel to the unconverted; and, though of the blinded Jews, to whom, as usual, he first addressed himself, he gained not many, it is probable, that, in making Gentile converts, he was more successful.

The apostle was authorized and commanded, by his divine Lord, to preach his gospel, both to the Greeks, together with those to whom their language, civilisation, and refinement, extended, and to those nations, who had not attained to their state of civilisation,—to those, who addicted themselves to philosophy, science, and literature, as well as to the illiterate multitude. “I am a debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians,—both to the wise, and to the unwise.” To execute this important work, they were no mean qualifications, that were

\* Ch. xv. 20-22.


necessary ; but, if necessary, the Apostle possessed them. Besides “the signs of an apostle,”—miraculous gifts and powers,—with a powerful understanding, there was united, in him, a knowledge of the learning and literature of the Gentiles. This is very evident from his own epistles, and from his history ; and were there no other proofs of the ability and discretion, with which he made use of his talents and acquirements, his discourse before the philosophers, in the Areopagus, at Athens, and that before King Agrippa, at Cesarea, would of themselves be sufficient. Where shall we find either arguments more convincing, or eloquence more powerful ? Thus, qualified, then, by gifts and powers, both natural and supernatural, and, thus, authorized and commanded, “he was ready, as much as in him lay, to preach the gospel, to them, that were at Rome also ;”—at Rome, the great seat of empire, philosophy, science, and literature.

In that mighty metropolis, the intelligent and learned, though well aware, that, in the prevailing idolatry and superstition, there was nothing, but error and fable, countenanced them ; because they were the religion of their country, and of their ancestors ; the rulers favoured and supported them, as an engine of state ; and the priesthood punctually and solemnly observed their rites and ordinances, from motives of interest. In introducing the gospel, then,—a religion subversive of all idolatry and

superstition,—into this city, the opposition of the rulers, and of the priesthood, was to be expected ; and the philosophers and other learned men would narrowly examine into its claims, as a religion from heaven ; and any thing in it, either false or absurd, they could not fail to expose to ridicule and scorn. But, “ the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ;” and for this he gives reasons of the most powerful nature. It is a dispensation great and glorious. “ It is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,—to the Jew, first, and also to the Gentile.” Our omnipotent Creator, and heavenly Father, has graciously ordained, that, in consequence of the obedience unto death of his own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that doom, which our original common-parent brought upon himself, and entailed on his posterity, should be reversed, and life and immortality be brought to light. This is a dispensation worthy of God, and too great and glorious, for words adequately to express ; and it is with much propriety, it is termed “ the power of God unto salvation.” Nor can the conditions of appropriating the benefits of this dispensation be regarded otherwise than as most free and gracious. To Jew and Gentile,—that is to all men,—when the light of the gospel shone on them, it was declared, that whoever should believe, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, and should receive him as such, would be saved.

But, in order to *final* salvation, we must ever bear in mind, that it is necessary for us to do and to endure the will of God. To enable us to do so, the gospel furnishes the most suitable means, and the most powerful motives. It reveals and affirms, that God is love,—that his own Son is the propitiation for our sins,—that the Son has loved us, and washed us, from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God,—that eternal life, glory, honour, and peace, will be the reward of all, who persevere in well-doing,—that the blood of Christ cleanseth, from all sin,—that there is joy in heaven over one sinner, who reforms,—that the wages of a course of sin is death,—that when the ungodly and wicked, either refuse, or abuse, the benefits of the gospel, they reject the counsel of God, against themselves, and account themselves unworthy of eternal life,—that, in a manner suitable to the freedom of the human will, the Spirit of God influences the heart and mind of every sincere Christian. This also is the power of God unto salvation ; for, thus, “God worketh in us to will and to do, of his gracious pleasure,” and enables us “to work out our own salvation.”

The free and gracious nature of the salvation, which the gospel brings, is here further explained. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith.” To his ancient peculiar people, Israel, the Lord gave a severe schoolmaster, whose



discipline, he intended, should ultimately lead them to Christ. By his servant Moses, he gave them a law; and whoever observed that law perfectly, in every point, would establish his right to life and salvation. But, alas! the commandment, which was ordained unto life, was, through the frailty of man, found to be unto death. The law armed sin, with a mortal power, and, in effect, became, to every individual, a ministration of death.—But, when, by the law of Moses, there could, thus, be no righteousness, or justification, and consequently no salvation, God, in his infinite mercy, revealed to all men, and especially to his ancient people, Israel, his own righteousness, or manner of justification. In the glorious dispensation of the gospel, “*eternal life*” is given to man, as “*the gift of God*, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who died for our sins, and rose again, for our justification.”—The appropriation of this righteousness, and salvation, of God is, “from faith to faith,”—wholly and purely by faith. “If,” saith the apostle in another part of this epistle,—“If thou shalt confess, with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For, with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, and, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.”

For the instruction of all Christians, but especially for that of the Jewish converts, whose prejudices, in favour of the law, as the means of establishing a

right to eternal life, it was very difficult to remove, the apostle here briefly notices, that the method of justification, and of obtaining eternal life, purely by faith, was intimated by the prophets, whose authority they themselves acknowledged. “As it is written, the just by faith shall live.”

Having asserted, that the gospel “was the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth ; —to the Jew, first, and also to the Gentile,” the apostle proceeds to show the extreme need, which Jew and Gentile had of this salvation. But this must form the subject of other discourses. Let us now conclude this discourse, by reflecting on our great obligation to God, for bringing ourselves to the knowledge of his salvation, and for placing that salvation within our reach. How shall we, once benighted, wandering, and estranged Gentiles, sufficiently praise God, who has called us, “out of darkness, into his marvellous light,”—“who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins.”\* How shall we sufficiently bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for bringing us from a state of having no hope, beyond this transitory existence, to the prospect of eternal life, happiness, and glory ! How shall we sufficiently express our gratitude to God our hea-

\* Col. i. 13.

venly Father, who, by his Son, has broken down the middle wall of partition, which during a period so long and so dreary, separated us from the ancient chosen people, and who no longer regards us as strangers and foreigners, but as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of his own household! What manner of love is this, which constrains God, our Father, to regard us, as his sons and daughters,—as heirs of himself, and as joint-heirs, with Jesus Christ, our Lord! Let us give expression to our gratitude, in the solemn words, which the apostle himself used, while his mind and heart were occupied with the contemplation of those glorious things. “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.”\* But, when we, thus, offer to God, our Father, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, how can we refrain from adoring the gracious, divine, Mediator, by whose intervention, our unspeakable blessings have been secured to us! “Unto him that loved us, and washed us, from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, his Father,—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”†

\* 1 Tim. i. 17.

† Rev. i. 5.

## LECTURE II.

## ROMANS, I. 18-32.

IN the former part of this chapter, the apostle declares, that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; because, to Jew and Gentile, it is "the power of God unto salvation;" and because it reveals, that this salvation is bestowed on men, in the most free and gracious manner possible. In the remaining part of the chapter, he gives a clear, though melancholy, demonstration of the great and urgent need, in which the Gentile world stood, of this salvation.

"For the wrath of God is revealed, from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." By the finger of Him, who formed the human heart, there is written, on its tablets, a law, which condemns moral evil, and which fills the guilty with the apprehension of punishment, and convinces men, that they, who commit crimes, deserve to die. "*No doubt*," said the barbarous people of Melita, upon seeing the viper fastening on the hand of the apostle, "this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to



live." But, these dictates of the human heart, clear and intelligible though they be, are not what the apostle means, when he denounces, the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; it is evident he means the punishment, with which the ungodly and wicked are to be visited, at the final judgment, as revealed in the gospel. The apostle makes the same declaration more explicitly and fully, in the second chapter, in which he says, that "indignation and wrath," will be the portion of "every soul of man, that doeth evil, in the day, when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to his gospel." Here, it deserves our serious attention that, in Scripture language, "wrath," signifies *punishment*, and that "the wrath of God," being a Hebraism, expressive of the highest degree, means punishment of the most signal and fearful nature.

While the representation, given in the remaining part of this chapter, respects the Gentile world collectively, it is clear, that the apostle has, in his eye, especially the Gentile philosophers and other learned men. He has prepared us for this, in saying, that, in preaching the gospel, he was a debtor "to the wise," as well as "to the unwise." And, indeed, in pointing at the philosophers and other learned men, in particular, he acted wisely and justly. They professed to be the lights of the world; and, in showing, that the light, which was in them, was nothing but

darkness, the apostle proved, that the prevailing darkness was great indeed. In proving, not only that the illiterate and ignorant were, in regard to true religion, blind and corrupt, but also that the philosophers and other learned men favoured and sanctioned their blindness and corruption, he clearly demonstrates the unspeakable need, in which all descriptions of men, in the Gentile world stood, of such a salvation, as the gospel reveals.

The apostle proceeds to bring forward his heavy charges, against the Gentiles, and especially against their philosophers, and other learned men. They “held the truth, in unrighteousness;”—they unrighteously suppressed and withheld, from the illiterate and ignorant multitude, who blindly devoted themselves to their idols and other fictitious divinities, their knowledge of the nature of the one, supreme, spiritual, and intelligent, Creator and Governor of the Universe. “For,” saith the apostle, “that which may be known of God *is manifest among them.*” It is beyond all doubt,—for their own writings bear ample testimony to it,—that the heathen philosophers and other learned men, not only knew, that the popular notions, in regard to religion, were altogether false, but also, that many of them entertained correct views of the nature of the glorious God. But, they wanted the integrity, courage, and piety, to undeceive the blinded people.

The apostle shows, how the thinking and intelli-

gent attained to the knowledge of the true God. He affirms, that "God," himself, "had showed it to them." In the view of the incorrupted and unsophisticated mind, the evidence, which we possess, of the nature and glorious attributes of God, is clear and irresistible. It derives itself from an infallible source,—from consciousness, experience, and the testimony of our senses.—In constructing a house,—a ship,—a time-piece,—or any such thing,—we find, within us, a living, intelligent, and invisible, agent, that forms an useful end, or purpose, and that devises a deliberate plan, and adopts means, or a series of means, to accomplish this end. Now, when we look around us, in the world, and attentively examine the two great kingdoms of organized matter, from the gigantic elephant, and the hugest inhabitant of the ocean, to the most diminutive insect, that creeps on the ground, and the animalcules that so densely people each drop of water, and that are visible only by optical assistance,—from the towering and majestic oak, to the smallest herb, on which we tread, in the field,—we find, that there is not one of the countless millions of individuals, which constitute those kingdoms, that bears not, in its structure, the clearest marks of a definite purpose, and of the most marvellous intelligence, wisdom, and power, in the choice and use of the means adopted, to compass that purpose.—Those great kingdoms, besides, are arranged into classes, kinds, species, and varieties ;

and the individuals of each order possess a peculiar structure, and are furnished, with peculiar organs, admirably suited to the elements, in which they respectively exist, to the functions, which they have to perform, and to the mode of their subsistence.—To what cause, then, shall we ascribe such an effect? Must we not ascribe similar effects to similar causes? Does not our reason compel us, to assign the creation of those innumerable organized things, which exist in the world, to a living, though invisible, agent, of infinite intelligence, wisdom, and power? Does not our reason compel us to assign to the matchless, as well as innumerable, works of nature, an Almighty and glorious workman?

To prevent uncertainty and deception, human artificers of celebrity stamp their works, with their names. In the works of nature, as those now under our consideration are usually termed, this would be altogether superfluous. All of them bear the Divine impress, in their matchless perfection, in design, mechanism, and execution,—in various inimitable specialities,—in their superlative fitness, for the purposes of their creation,—and countless numbers of them, also, in their inconceivable magnitude, and indescribable beauty, sublimity, and glory.

These observations are pre-eminently true of those glorious works,—the luminaries of heaven,—which regulate and measure times and seasons, in this our world. The celestial chronometer is, not only in-

comparable, in magnitude and splendour, but is also constructed on a principle, which has hitherto remained, and will probably for ever remain a profound secret to man,—the principle of perpetual motion,—and with the power of rectifying and regulating itself. In all ages, and in all nations, those glorious luminaries have, in a language, which the attentive and thinking well understood, proclaimed, that a supreme, omnipotent, Being, of unsearchable knowledge and wisdom, and of exuberant goodness, created, and constantly governs, them.

The relation, which the various kingdoms and works of nature, in this world, bear to each other, their mutual dependence,—the relation in which all of them stand to the globe, and to the system, of which it forms a part,—and the dependence of all things on the globe, and on the system of the universe,—indicate unity of design, in their creation, and prove, that the universe, with all that it contains, owes its being, order, and continuance, to *One* great and glorious Creator and Ruler.

These reflections, then, clearly show the truth of the words of the apostle, when, he says, that “the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen,—being understood, by the things, that are made,—even his eternal power and Godhead.”

The charges, which the apostle brings against the Gentile world, and especially against their phi-

losophers and other learned men, are very heavy, as well as very true. "They knew God," yet "they glorified him not as God ; neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations ; and their inconsiderate heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."—"They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, in preference to the Creator, who is ever to be blessed. Amen !" It is, accordingly, with much truth and justice, that the apostle affirms of the Gentiles, that they were without excuse.

The ingratitude of the Gentile world towards God, in return for his benefits, equalled their wilful blindness, in regard to his glorious perfections, and was equally inexcusable. If a child, who is insensible of the anxious care, the protection, the fondness, the bounty, and the indulgence, of an earthly father, be justly deemed undutiful and unnatural, and if, when he abuses such benefits, and despises and dishonours the father, who bestows them, he be justly deemed a monster, how much more undutiful is man, when he is insensible of the unwearied care, and exuberant goodness, of that heavenly Father, to whom he owes his being, and all the enjoyments of that being!—how much more monstrous is it in man, to neglect,

despise, and dishonour, the beneficent Author of all his blessings !

In the passage, which now occupies our attention, the apostle plainly teaches, that the *goodness*, as well as the other attributes of God, have, from the foundation of the world, been manifest, from his works. For the word, which we have rendered "Godhead," signifies the dominion and providence of God, in which his *goodness* is clearly seen ; and, with this correspond the words of the apostle to the people of Lystra, to whom he declared, that, in no nation, "does God leave himself without witness, in that he does good, and gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts, with food and gladness."\*

But such ingratitude and ungodliness, in rational, accountable, beings, like man, God, in his just moral government of the world, could not leave unpunished. Though he purposed mercy, in the end, towards the Gentile world, he saw it fit, that they should, for a long and dreary period, be delivered over to their own wilful blindness, and corruptions, and to the degradation and misery, which ever accompany such blindness and corruption. The Gentile world, learned and unlearned, amazingly dishonoured the glorious God ; and he, in punishment, suffered them, as amazingly, to degrade themselves,—delivering them over to their own depraved passions, and corrupted

\* Acts, xiv. 17.

morals. We will not here grieve the spirit of the Christian, by particularizing some of the guilty and degrading practices, which the apostle mentions, as prevalent, in the Gentile world ;—we must refer him to the painful and humiliating description of the apostle himself,—observing only, that with his account of those practices, that of all profane authors fully agrees. But the general list of the sins, prevalent among the Gentiles must not be omitted. “Because they did not like to retain God, in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things, which are not convenient,”—that is, those things, which are very sinful,—“being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness,—full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity,—whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.” It is worthy of remark, that in the language of the apostle this catalogue of sins is an alliterated one,—a forcible manner of speech, by which he would convey to us his deep sense, both of their greatness, and of their multiplicity ; and this remark, it may also be observed, explains the unconnected order in which those sins are mentioned, in our language.

Let us not forget, that the spiritual blindness, and the moral depravity, of the Gentile world, were a



wilful blindness and depravity. "The work of the law was written in their hearts;" and, thus, conscience, when, at any time, listened to, declared to them, that they were not fit to live. But instead of listening to the dictates of conscience, and of obeying its voice, they not only themselves sinned, as here described, but also readily and gladly encouraged others, in their sins. "Who knowing the judgment of God,—that they, which commit such things, are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them, that do them." This, then, was the highest pitch of impiety and of moral corruption, and the deepest aggravation of guilt, and justified their righteous Creator, in the severity of the punishment, to which he consigned them.

If it be asked, in what sense, we are to understand the Gentiles to have been given over to a reprobate mind, and to their own corrupted ways, it may briefly be replied, that it was, by withholding from them all those great and precious privileges and blessings, which God granted to his peculiar people, Israel.

In considering the description, which the apostle here gives of the religious and moral state of the Gentile world, it is necessary, that we should bear in mind; that the description refers to them, in a *collective* sense, and to the character, which, in that sense, belonged to them, and not to individual character. For, in this chapter, it is the professed design of the apostle, to show, that the Gentile

world, collectively considered, stood in the most urgent need of the salvation that is in Christ, and which is revealed in the gospel; and it is but too evident, that, in the accomplishment of that design, he has fully succeeded. A due sense of this will prevent us from falling into very serious mistakes, in forming an estimate of the character of many individuals, among the Gentiles, whose virtues compel and deserve our admiration.

The portion of the epistle, which we have now considered, is full of the most important instruction to the Christian Church, in every place, and in every age. In divine revelation, it is assumed, that we closely and reverently attend to the religion of reason and nature. Yet, it is but too evident, that in no part of the Christian Church, do either the people give due attention to this fundamental religion, or the pastors sufficiently inculcate a sense of its great importance. To the intelligent and reflecting Christian, this must appear the more wonderful, when, on the one hand, the noble thoughts and sentiments, and the ardent devotion, which the contemplation of the works of nature raised and cherished, in the breasts of those good and pious men, of whom the Scriptures of the Old Testament make so ample and honourable mention, are considered, and, on the other, the various and great discoveries, which, since their time, have been made, in the sciences, which have the material creation for their object, and, especially, in

that, which relates to the solar and universal systems. And, on a superficial view of the subject, it will appear still more wonderful, that, among men of science, and even among those, who are conversant with the sublime miracles of the magnitudes, motions, and laws, of the heavenly bodies, there should be some, who either affect to entertain, or, in reality, do entertain, sceptical, if not atheistical, views, relative to the existence and attributes of that intelligent, omnipotent, and glorious God, who called into existence the universe, and who, by his wise and good providence has, ever since its creation, continued to govern it.

But, the well-informed and considerate Christian can neither be influenced, by the doubts of the sceptic, or by the incredulity of the atheist, nor be at a loss to know the cause from which they proceed. He well knows, that the general cause is that, which so extensively and so fatally prevailed among even intelligent and learned men, in the ancient Gentile world, and which the apostle assigns in the passage, which we have now considered. As "*they* liked not to retain God, in their knowledge," so *now*, it is to be feared, there are many of the same description, who care not to maintain, in their minds, a due sense of the existence, attributes, and providence of God,—many, who have eyes, with many optical instruments, well fitted to aid those eyes, and who, notwithstanding, will not perceive. Though the book of nature, and that part of

it especially, which treats of the heavenly bodies, declares the existence, government, goodness, and glory of God, in a language most clear, most eloquent, and most universal, there are many readers of that book, who pay attention merely to the structure, terms, and words of the language,—who are mere minute grammarians, or curious philologists, or who, at most, study only those chapters of it, which relate only to the interests of this transitory state, while they utterly neglect those unspeakably important and sublime parts, which lead the mind to a future and more glorious state of existence, and to the ineffable genius, wisdom, and intelligence, of its glorious author,—while they bestow not perhaps a thought on the author, nor make an allusion to his name, more than if the work had not had an author at all. Neither can there be gratitude in the breasts of such persons towards the beneficent author of their being and happiness; for, where there is no acknowledgment of God, how should there be gratitude towards him? The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass the master of the crib; but they neither know nor consider!

We would here enter a caution against the influence, which philosophers and other learned men, of great name, who are of the description just mentioned, unhappily have over many of their fellow-men. Little do the thoughtless, the gay, the sensual, and the selfish, who, for obvious reasons, are ready to follow such blind guides, consider, that there can-


not exist greater weakness, or stupidity, than is to be found, in such persons ; at least, in regard to religion. For surely there is greater imbecility, in the incapacity to be convinced of the great principles of religion, under that strong light of evidence, which has convinced men of the soundest minds, and greatest talent, science, and learning, that ever appeared in the world, and which, from its own nature, is irresistible, than, from bad education, unwarily to receive, as true, the grossest fables of superstition. The modern atheist, as well as the ancient idolatrous philosopher, while he professes to be wise, may, in the appropriate language of the apostle, assuredly be called a fool.

Let the peasant, or the artisan, gratefully consider, that he is, in this world, on every hand, surrounded with the *same kind* of evidence of the being, glorious attributes, and gracious providence, of God, that the most scientific and learned man possesses. The proof, strong though it be, is but cumulative. The man of science and learning, indeed, from his more extensive acquaintance with nature, sees proofs, without end, multiplying before him. Yet proofs, of the same nature, invite, on every side, the attention, of every man of plain understanding, who will open his eyes on them. For, there is not a plant,—there is not an animal,—around us, whose organization and mode of existence do not afford a clear proof of the being, and providence of God. And where is that rational man,

who, when, by day, he takes a deliberate and contemplative view of this world with its furniture and garniture, or, by night, of the glories of the heavens, does not, from his soul, find himself constrained to say, "Great, manifold, and marvellous, are thy works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all! Thou art wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working! All thy works praise thee!"

It particularly becomes us here to observe, that we,—the Christian Church,—owe the most fervent gratitude to the Father of lights, for calling us, by his gospel, to the knowledge of himself. In his own time, he had mercy on a blinded, estranged world. Having, during many ages, selected for himself a people, to preserve religion from utter extinction, and to prepare the world for the reception of a glorious deliverer, and a most gracious and universal dispensation, he, in a manner manifestly supernatural and miraculous, communicated the knowledge of himself and of his will and purposes to that people; and, in the fulness of time, and in a manner as clearly supernatural and miraculous, that deliverer, first personally, and then by his apostles and gospel, communicated to the world the knowledge of the living and true God, with a clearness and fulness, that render us unspeakably more inexcusable than the idolatrous Gentiles, if we form not a due acquaintance, with his glorious character, and if we are not thankful.

We cannot but render our ready assent to the




declaration of the apostle, that the Gentiles, and especially their learned men, were without excuse, in worshipping and serving the creature, in preference to the adorable Creator and only God of the universe; and we cannot help accounting the ancient people of God, enlightened and highly favoured, as they were, incomparably more inexcusable, in so often and so greatly, forsaking the rock of their salvation, and in falling into idolatry, with its attendant abominations. But, while we entertain these sentiments, in regard to them, we should err exceedingly, were we to suppose, that the Christian Church is not chargeable with sins of an idolatrous nature, and, therefore, still more inexcusable than either of them. For, not to say any thing of the use of images, in some parts of the Christian Church, it is to the considerate Christian manifest, that there is in it much *virtual* idolatry. If, for a god, we set up, in our imaginations, a being invested with attributes, different from those of that God, whom our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to us, in his gospel, how can we be regarded otherwise than as idolaters? If, from the prejudices of education, a blind attachment to human creeds, and the neglect of a candid and diligent examination of the divine oracles, we worship, for our god, a being partial, unrighteous, unmerciful, and cruel, ought we not, with our incomparably superior advantages, in justice, to be accounted more inexcusable idolaters than the worshippers of Moloch?

If, contrary to the express and uniform testimony of the divine oracles, we bring ourselves to believe, that purity of heart and sanctity of life are not necessary to the acceptable worship of the being, whom we call our god, how can we, in justice, escape being accounted idolatrous, and exceedingly more inexcusable, than were the worshippers of the various unholy gods of the Gentiles? And, if, from blind prejudice, passion, or interest, the ministers of the gospel rivet on their people the chains of such an odious and destructive superstition, how exceedingly more guilty and inexcusable are they than were the Gentile learned men, who unrighteously withheld, from a blinded and idolatrous people, the knowledge of the true God?

Under all dispensations, it clearly appears to be the way of God, more or less, according to circumstances, to deliver over his rational and accountable creatures, when they abuse their light and advantages, to their own wilful blindness and corruptions; and, thus, are easily accounted for all the errors, superstitions, and corruptions, that prevail in the Christian Church.

May, then, the living and true God, the Father of lights, of his great mercy, grant, that every one, who professes to worship him, may be deeply convinced of the good and the necessity of forming a just and clear view of his character! And, to obtain such a view, may every Christian, and especially every





Christian teacher, diligently and devoutly read the book of nature, but still more diligently and devoutly the book of divine revelation;—carefully guarding against that, which has, in all ages of the world, proved so destructive, and which, accordingly, is so expressly forbidden, by him, who justly claims, to be our sole teacher, in religious truth,—a blind deference to human authority and to human systems of religion! May every Christian, not only pray, but likewise use his endeavour, that those countless multitudes, who still remain, in the Gentile state, without hope, and without God in the world, and who are sunk in the degradation of idolatry, superstition, and corruption, may be brought to the knowledge of the living and true God and of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, and to the rich privileges, and glorious prospects of the gospel!

## LECTURE III.

## ROMANS, II.

IN the first chapter of this epistle, the apostle clearly demonstrates, that the Gentile world stood in the greatest need of the salvation, that is in Christ. In this chapter he proves, that the Jews had equal, if not greater, need of that salvation, and prepares to vindicate the divine procedure, in the reception of the Gentiles, into the church, on the terms, proposed in the gospel, and to remove the strong and inveterate prejudices, which the Jews entertained against their reception.

All history, sacred and profane, testifies, that the Jews had, at this period, abandoned themselves to all manner of vice, crime, and impiety. Yet, to convince them of their need of the salvation, that is in Christ, was exceedingly difficult. Ever since they became a nation, they had enjoyed peculiar privileges of inestimable value. Theirs was the adoption; theirs was the glory; theirs were the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, the fathers; and from them was to come the long

and earnestly expected Messiah. On these privileges, and not on genuine piety and moral worth, they rested their claim and hopes of acceptance with God.

Before proceeding further, in this discourse, it must be observed, that, in a manner analogous to that, which he adopts, in the first chapter, the apostle, in this one, addresses himself to the Jews, and especially to their teachers and guides—the scribes, Pharisees, priests, and other persons, professing to possess more than ordinary information,—as possessing the character, which belonged to them *generally*. We should greatly err, were we to suppose, that, among the ancient people of God, there was not *an individual*, to whom the character, here described, was not applicable. It was sufficient for his purpose, to show, that the general state of the nation required the salvation, which he preached ; and at any thing beyond this, accordingly, he does not aim.

The manner, in which the apostle addresses the Jews is characteristic, at once, of his talent and of his great tenderness towards them. To convince them of their sins, and to excite in them an abhorrence for them, he well knew, that there could not be a more effectual way, than to point out those sins, in the Gentiles, for whom they had a deep aversion. Accordingly, it was immediately after depicting the character of the Gentiles, that he proceeds to draw that of the Jews ; and, to give as little offence to

them as possible, in proceeding with this ungrateful task, he, at first, refrains from naming them. "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for, wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou, that judgest, dost the same things."

The generality of the Jews, indeed, were able to shut their eyes against the powerful light of the arguments of which the apostle makes use, in this invaluable chapter, and to harden their hearts against the strong influence of the sentiments, which it contains. But, notwithstanding, there is no unprejudiced mind, which must not see, nor is there a pure and well regulated heart, which must not feel, that there is neither an assertion, nor a sentiment, in it, which does not fully accord with the clearest dictates of reason, and the purest sentiments of religion. This is exemplified, in the next verse. There he assumes it, as a religious axiom, and declares to the "man,"—the unnamed Jew,—that God, the just ruler of the universe, must, in his government over mankind, his rational and accountable creatures, under any circumstances punish those, who practise the sins, to which he alludes. "But, we are sure, that the judgment of God is according to truth against them, who commit such things."

Vain and presumptuous, then, it would be, in any man, but especially vain and presumptuous, it would be, in a man, possessing great and peculiar spiritual

advantages, calculated, not only to guide him, in his own conduct, but also to form a correct judgment of the conduct of others, less favourably situated,—yet committing the same sins, for which he condemns them,—to expect that *he* should escape the retributive operation of the fundamental maxim of the divine moral government; vain and presumptuous, accordingly, it was in the Jew, who judged and condemned the Gentile, for the same sins, which he himself committed, to expect, that he should escape condemnation and punishment. “And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them, which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”

The “man,”—the Jew,—who was so signally the object of the peculiar regard of God, instead of making a suitable improvement of his advantages, greatly abused them. Blindly presuming, as already observed, on his great privileges, he brought himself to think, that, however wicked his life might be, these alone were sufficient to secure to him the divine favour, with all its happy effects; and the false and evil principles, thus entertained, he fully and unscrupulously reduced to practice. Yet, his God and heavenly Father exercised great patience and long forbearance towards him;—on the unfruitful tree all manner of attention and pains, and every advantage in culture, were bestowed;—but to no purpose. The blinded Jew would neither see, that

his great and peculiar advantages,—far from securing to him impunity in transgression,—were divinely intended to correct whatever was wrong and evil, in his heart and life, and to serve as motives to the practice of whatever is holy, just, and good, nor perceive, that the abuse of them would, in the day of final account and retribution, incur an aggravated punishment. “Or, despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

The time of retribution will be, that “day, when,” according to the gospel of this apostle, and according to the uniform doctrine of the other inspired apostles, and of our Lord himself, “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”

Relative to the final retribution, the apostle here introduces parenthetically some particulars of unspeakable importance. “To them, who, by patient continuance, in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality,” God will award “eternal life; but, unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,”—severe and condign punishment.

It was necessary, that the Jew, who presumptu-

ously and blindly imagined, that his present privileges and spiritual relation to God, independently of merit, secured to him eternally the divine favour, should be expressly and solemnly informed, that final retribution will take place, with the strictest impartiality. It was necessary to assure him, that, while no other denomination of the workers of iniquity, in the world, can finally escape with impunity, *his* punishment must, from the abuse of his great advantages, be peculiarly signal; but, that, while all other men, who have led a good and pious life, will be rewarded, God, in his kindness and faithfulness, will signally reward the good and pious Jew. “Tribulation and anguish” shall come upon “every soul of man that doeth evil,—of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory honour and peace” shall be awarded “to every man that worketh good,—to the Jew, first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God.”

The apostle, proceeding in his solemn declarations to the Jews, relative to final retribution, affirms, that “as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law, and” that “as many, as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.” Here a critical remark is necessary. The word “law,” both in scriptural and classical use, has a variety of meanings. In scriptural use, it sometimes signifies a part, and sometimes the whole, of the Scriptures of the Old Testament; in some places a part, in others,

the whole, of the Jewish dispensation; and, occasionally, it means any dispensation of revealed religion. Hence, the sense, which it bears, must often be ascertained by the scope of the passage, in which it is used. In the passage before us, accordingly, it must be taken in the last mentioned sense;—it signifies any dispensation of revealed religion. What the apostle, then, teaches here is this;—that the wicked and ungodly, who have not had the benefit of a dispensation of revealed religion, cannot escape final destruction; and that those of that description, who have had that advantage, such as the Jews, will be condemned by the light and laws of that dispensation, and will, accordingly, also finally perish.

The apostle's style of writing, concise and rapid, as it frequently is, is often elliptical; and sentences, accordingly, sometimes occur, connected, in sense, not with the words immediately preceding those sentences, but with others, in the context. A little above, in this passage, he affirms, that, while the wicked Jew shall be visited with condign and signal punishment, glory, honour, and peace, shall be the reward of every Gentile, who worketh good. It is to this important declaration, that the words, which follow, refer. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For, when the Gentiles, which have not a law, do by nature the things,"—the moral, more important things,—“of the law, these, having not



the law, are a law unto themselves." But how should the Gentiles do, by nature, the things of the law, or be a law to themselves? The apostle explains this. "They show the work of the law, written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean-while,"—rather, as in the original, their discussions among themselves—"accusing, or else excusing them." It is evident, that the finger of God has written a law on the tablets of their hearts; conscience, when listened to, acts as a divine monitor within them; and the discussions which they have among themselves, relative to vice and virtue, teach them the evil and turpitude of the one, and the good and excellency of the other.

The apostle, now, lays aside all reserve, addresses the Jew directly, and by name, and, having made his preparations, makes the most irresistible attack on the strongholds of his prejudices. While, the sequel, like the former part, of the chapter, consists of didactic, authoritative, declarations, it, at the same time, constitutes the most powerful possible vindication of the divine estimate of human conduct, and of the divine final retribution; and, as the whole passage is as clear and intelligible, as it is powerful, it is better, not to interrupt it, by any unnecessary observations. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the

things, that are more excellent,—being instructed out of the law,—and art confident, that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them, which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth,”—the knowledge of what good moral conduct is,—“in the law.—Thou, then, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou, that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou, that sayest, a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou, that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrileges? Thou, that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law, dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written. Circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou keep the law; but, if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision,”—great as the privileges are, of which it is the sign and seal,—“is made uncircumcision. If, then, the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, that fulfillet the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision,”—who, notwithstanding the advantage of the law and of circumcision,—“dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and cir-

cumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter,”—not a ritual circumcision,—“ whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Thus, in this chapter, the apostle clearly proves, that the unbelieving Jews were, as he, in the next chapter, terms it, “ under sin ;” and the implied and just inference is, that they stood in the greatest need of the salvation of God, in the dispensation of the gospel. He declares, that, in the moral government of the world, there is, with God, no respect of persons ; and, from this, it follows, that God is not unjust, but, on the contrary, good and gracious, in conferring on the Gentiles the benefits of the gospel, and just, in depriving the Jews of those peculiar spiritual advantages, which they had so long enjoyed, and so greatly abused.

On the things contained in this chapter various reflections, of unspeakable importance, to those who are placed under the dispensation of the gospel, may be made. In those things, our attention is drawn to that most important of all considerations,—the universal judgment. This is a subject, which requires no strained efforts of eloquence, to make it impressive. No words can make it more impressive than do the simple words of the divine oracles. According to the gospel preached, by the apostle, and which he received by immediate revelation, there will be a day, in which the secrets of all men will be judged. “ God has appointed a day, in

which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man, whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”\* In that solemn day, retribution will take place, with perfect impartiality. God, the judge of all the earth, is no respecter of persons. He, who worshippeth him, and worketh righteousness, whatever may be his nation, is accepted by him, and will, in the day of final retribution, be put in possession of eternal life and happiness ; but, every individual, who,—either misimproving the advantages of divine revelation, or habitually acting against the dictates of that law, which, under all dispensations, is written on the tablets of every human heart, and in opposition to reason, and to the knowledge of right and wrong, subsisting more or less among all denominations of mankind,—has been a worker of iniquity, “shall be punished, with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” Inevitable, signal, punishment, will be inflicted on every habitual sinner, whether Christian, Jew, or Gentile ; but, eternal life, honour, and happiness, will be the inestimable and glorious reward of every individual, who leads a pious and good life, of whatever denomination of mankind he may be.

When we, then, seriously consider the unspeakably important doctrine of the final universal judgment,

\* Acts, xvii. 31.

we cannot fail to be sensible of the wisdom and necessity of working out our own salvation, with all care, diligence, and perseverance. What would not the wicked and ungodly, in the day of final account and retribution, give, that they might not hear the unutterably terrible sentence,—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !” \* What would the pious and righteous, then, take, in exchange, for the eternal life, glory, honour, and peace, which will be confirmed to them, by the ineffably joyful sentence, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, from the foundation of the world !” †

The penitent sinner, who sincerely renounces his sins, and who earnestly endeavours to do the will of God, has, in the doctrine of final retribution, as the apostle here states it, no real cause, either of despair, or of despondency. The general principles of the divine moral government must be expressed, in general terms, which do not affect the declarations of Scripture, relative to specialities, in that government. If, in this chapter, the apostle teaches, that, in the day of final retribution, “God will render to every man, according to his deeds,” he also declares, that the goodness of God is designed, and calculated, to bring the sinner to repentance ; and another inspired apostle solemnly attests the truth of his declaration, when he says, that we ought to account

\* Matt. xxv. 34.

† Matt. xxv. 41.

the long-suffering of God to be intended for our salvation. Though it be true, that God will judge the world, in righteousness, it is equally true, that, towards the proper objects, his justice will be accompanied with mercy and grace. It is equally true, that Christ came, to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. It is equally true and faithful, that "Jesus Christ came into the world, to save sinners," and that "his blood cleanseth from all sin." It is equally true, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner, who repents. This, then, is full of encouragement to every penitent sinner, and renders the impenitent transgressor altogether without excuse.

They, who are but superficially acquainted with this epistle,—and they are not a few,—may find it difficult to reconcile to the doctrine, that, in the day of final retribution, we shall be, either rewarded, or punished, according to our works, the doctrine of our justification freely by the grace of God, or by faith, without works, as taught in this epistle. The difficulty will vanish, by a close and candid examination of the nature of that justification. But, as this examination will occur, in the sequel of these discourses, it may here suffice to observe, that the justification, which the apostle teaches, in this epistle, is a justification, which takes place in this our Christian state of probation, and which will, either, from the good use, that we make of it, end

in eternal life, or, from our abuse of it, terminate in an aggravated and signal punishment.

The manner, in which the apostle speaks, in this chapter, of final retribution, in reference to the Gentile world, cannot fail to make the heart of every benevolent Christian glow with gratitude and praise to the righteous and gracious Judge of all the earth. However differently human systems of theology, and the prejudices, peculiar to sects and parties, may bring many to think, it is evidently a legitimate inference from the words of the inspired apostle, that countless numbers of the Gentiles will come to the enjoyment of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace. Great, indeed, and deplorable have, in all ages, been the moral corruptions and impieties of the Gentile world, collectively considered ; but it is undeniable,—for it is matter of history and experience,—that valuable and bright virtues have greatly adorned many individuals among them ; and it were a great error, to think that virtues equally valuable and bright have not adorned millions of them, whose lives are now known only to the Omniscient. In the day, in which each individual of the human race shall receive according to his deeds, the righteous Judge will doubtless make allowance for those disadvantages, occasioned by the general dispensation, under which the Gentiles have been placed ; and the great power of the prejudices, arising from false and bad education, and from a general evil example, cannot, in

that day, fail to be considered, to the advantage of those, who have, in some measure, resisted that power. We know, that, as all the race of mankind return to their kindred dust, in consequence of the transgression of their first common parent, Adam, so also shall they all be recalled to life, in virtue of the obedience unto death of the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ. Who, then, shall say, that a mere restoration to life will be the only benefit, which the Gentiles will receive, at the hands of the Saviour of the world? Who shall say, that millions of the Gentiles would not most gratefully and joyfully have accepted the privileges and benefits, now possessed by his church, had they had the offer of them? Who shall say, that forgiveness will not be granted to countless numbers of the Gentiles, who may have repented of their sins, for the sake of that Divine Mediator, between God and men, who gave himself a ransom for all?—That the apostle should discourse more fully and particularly of the salvation of devout and virtuous Gentiles, was not to be expected, when it is considered, that it was the great business of his life to reclaim the Gentiles from their errors and sins, and to bring them to embrace the gospel. If, after the brief statement of the doctrine, here given, the prejudiced Jew asked, “What advantage, then, hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?” had the apostle discoursed more fully and explicitly, on the point, might there not be a danger, that the



unreasonable Gentile would ask, "What advantage, then, has the Christian? Or what profit is there in baptism?"

In this chapter, the apostle, in the most eloquent and impressive manner, shows to the unbelieving, disobedient Jew, and, by the clearest analogy and implication, to the disobedient Christian, the great responsibility, arising from the possession of the spiritual advantages of a special covenant relation with God, and the condemnation, which, in the day of final retribution, will be occasioned to those, who abuse those advantages, from being merely, in profession, what the uninstructed, yet obedient Gentiles, in many instances, are, by practice. In making choice of Israel, to be his peculiar people, God designed, that, by their improvement of the special favour granted to them, they should be the means of making his name to be known and glorified in all the earth. But, they served not, as they ought, this important purpose. Through their impiety and wickedness, the glorious name of the living and true God was blasphemed, among the Gentiles; and it was chiefly by the signal punishment of his people, that the attention of the world was drawn to him, Thus, alas! in a great and striking measure, it is also with the Christian Church. What nation is there on the earth, to whom Christians have not been known, chiefly by their injustice, their cruelties, their oppressions, their impurities, and their impieties;

and what nation, however barbarous, is there, whom intercourse with us has not rendered more corrupt and miserable, and thus alienated still further, from the knowledge and service of the living and true God? But, not with impunity. For do not many events, which happen in the christianized world, indicate temporal, merited, punishment, and exemplify future aggravated retribution, for this great abuse of the advantages of the glorious dispensation, under which we live?

In addressing the Jew, the apostle, as already observed, has especially in his eye the more learned, yet prejudiced and disobedient, Jew, who professed to enlighten and to guide others; and he openly and severely exposes the preposterous and absurd, as well as sinful, conduct of that Jew, and, with his conduct, that of every one, of a similar character and profession, in our Israel. The implied exhortation to Christian pastors is but too necessary and too manifest. Is it not evident, that we are chargeable, either with strong prejudices, or with wilful errors, when it is considered, that, of the numberless and widely differing creeds, which we respectively profess and teach, we almost never, in any degree, change that one, in which we have been educated? And is it not thus evident, that, in many respects, we must mislead those, whom we undertake to instruct and guide? Is it not evident, that, in too many instances, our light does not shine before men? Is it not but too true,

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that, imperfect, as we all of us are, we have, on due reflection, great cause to ejaculate, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Perfect, O God, Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, thy strength, in our weakness!

## LECTURE IV.

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ROMANS, III.

IN the preceding chapter, the apostle assures the unbelieving Jews, and especially those of them who taught and led others, that they were inexcusable and self-condemned, in committing those very sins, which they reprobated in the Gentiles ;—that the Jews, by impenitently abusing the exuberant, special, goodness of God, towards them, incurred very great guilt and condemnation ;—that, in the day of final retribution, each individual of the human race, whether Jew or Gentile, shall be either rewarded, or punished, according to his works, with perfect impartiality ;—that circumcision,—the seal of the covenant, subsisting between God and the Jews,—was of advantage only to those of them, who obeyed the law ;—that, to the Gentile, obedience to the law, divinely impressed on his heart, secured the ultimate benefits intended by a special covenant ;—that the Gentile, who obeyed the law of nature, condemned the transgressor of the revealed law ;—that he was not truly a Jew, who was such only outwardly, nor circumcision that, which

was merely external ; but that he was really a Jew, —the object of the special regard of God,—who was one internally, and who sought the praise of God, in preference to the praise of men, and the true circumcision, that which is in the heart and spirit.

These doctrines were in direct opposition to the views of the unbelieving Jew, who, for acceptance with God, arrogantly and presumptuously relied chiefly, if not entirely, on the privileges of the divine covenant. With wonder, therefore, and indignation, the Jew puts to the apostle this question ; “ What advantage, then, has the Jew ? Or what profit is there of circumcision ? ” The apostle replies ; “ Much every way ; and chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Thus, the apostle denies not, that the Jew possessed great advantages,—acknowledged advantages, indeed, which, in the sequel of the epistle, he himself enumerates and describes. But, the chief advantage, which the Jew possessed, the apostle declared to be, the possession of the oracles of God. This manifestly was an invaluable treasure,—a privilege and benefit inestimable ;—and it is not without a special and evident design, that the apostle here mentions that privilege and benefit. In those oracles, the Messiah was promised and described ; in those oracles it was predicted, that the Messiah should be rejected, by the Jews, and should, by their hands, suffer and die ; but that he should rise again from the dead ; in those oracles, it was foretold, that,

for their great and innumerable sins, but especially for the enormous crime, of embruing their hands in the blood of the Messiah, the Jews should be rejected, from being the people of God, and that, in their place, another nation should be received as his people. Accordingly, to the prophecies, contained in the divine oracles, the apostle, in his endeavours to convert the Jews, constantly drew their attention ; and one instance, among many, of this we have, in the discourse, which, on his arrival at Rome, he addressed to those very Jews, whom he now has immediately in his eye. To mention, then, the advantage, which the Jews had, in being intrusted with the oracles of God, virtually was, to put them in mind of their wilful and inexcusable blindness, in rejecting the gospel, and of the prophecies, contained in those oracles, relative to their rejection from the kingdom of God, with the direful consequences of that rejection, and to the reception, into that kingdom, in their place of another and a better nation ; and this the Jew would, at once, perceive. Hence, the next question and objection, which the apostle puts into the mouth of the unbelieving Jew ;—a question and objection, which, no doubt, the apostle had actually and frequently heard from him.

“ What if some have not believed ? Shall their unbelief make the faith,” or faithfulness,—“ of God of none effect ?” Shall God, by depriving the Jews of their peculiar privileges, and by rejecting them,

as you teach he will, fail to fulfil his promise,—the promise made, by God, to Abraham, and recorded in the divine oracles, that he would be a God to that patriarch, and to his posterity, *by an everlasting covenant?* The apostle solemnly denies the charge; “God forbid! Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” Let us account all men false, rather than imagine, that God is unfaithful. If God seems to fail, in fulfilling his promise, it was because it was given conditionally, and because the conditions have not been observed; “as it is written, that thou mightest be justified, in thy sayings, and mightest overcome, when thou art judged.”\* Or, that thou mightest be just, in what thou hast spoken, and clear in thy judging. What God “had spoken” was, the promise given to David; “Thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever;” and the “judging” meant was, the announcement made to David, on account of his great sin, in the matter of Uriah; “The sword shall never depart out of thy house.” The penitent king confessed his great guilt, and declared, that neither the justice, nor the faithfulness, of God, could be impeached, though his threatenings should be executed. Thus, neither the justice, nor the faithfulness, of God could be impeached, for visiting the Jews with severe punishment,—even with a long rejection and all its miseries; and of this the Jew ought to have been sensible.

\* Ps. li. 4.

The next two questions put, by the apostle, into the mouth of the unbelieving Jew, with all the expressiveness and force of antithesis, are occasioned by the terms of the last answer, relative to the divine justice and veracity, and may be regarded as an amplification of the last question. "But, if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous, who inflicteth wrath?—I speak as a man." If the charge of wickedness, which you bring against us, be well founded, will not the faithfulness and goodness of God, be more illustriously manifested, in refraining from rejecting and punishing us? For will not his faithfulness, in continuing us, as his people, and thus fulfilling his promise, notwithstanding our wickedness, be thus more gloriously displayed? Will not our punishment be even unjust? And shall we, indeed, come to the conclusion, that God, in rejecting and punishing us, is really unjust? Here the impiety of the supposition makes the apostle pause, to remind us, that he is stating the objections of an unbelieving Jew. But, deferring to the sequel of the epistle the vindication of the divine procedure, in rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and in receiving, in their place, the believing Gentiles, to the undevout supposition of the Jew, in imagining God unjust, he now only makes this short, but solemn and emphatical answer; "God forbid! For, then, how shall God judge the world?" That God, the present



and final, supreme, Judge of all mankind, is an unjust judge, is an idea not only unspeakably awful, but altogether contrary to the dictates both of reason and revelation.

“For,” continues the unbelieving Jew, “if the truth of God hath more abounded, through my lie, unto his glory, why yet am I judged as a sinner?” If the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promise, be more illustriously manifested, and if his glory be greatly promoted, by my unbelief and wickedness, why should I be condemned and punished? Why should punishment follow a result so glorious? This reasoning is so clearly false and pernicious, that, instead of exposing the error and evil of it directly, the apostle merely bids the Jew, to follow it out to its necessary conclusion,—a conclusion, which would establish a general maxim, of a nature the most wicked and pernicious. “And not rather,” that is, and why not at once say, “Let us do evil that good may come.”

Here, the apostle takes occasion bitterly to complain, that he himself, if not all the apostles, were charged,—doubtless by the unbelieving Jews,—with teaching doctrines, which favoured the maxim now reprobated. The unbelieving Jews, it is very probable, misrepresented the doctrine of free justification, by faith, as resolvable into that maxim. In the remaining part of the epistle, we shall see, how utterly devoid of truth the charge was. At present,

the apostle contents himself, with merely declaring, that they, who could bring forward a charge so false and wicked, should incur a condemnation and punishment justly deserved.

“What then;”—continues the unbelieving Jew,—“Are we better?” Do we, Jews, excel the Gentiles? For, that we do excel them, you seem to have admitted, in saying, that, in every way, we have greatly the advantage over them. “By no means;” replies the apostle; “for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” Your advantage consists in your great and distinguishing privileges. But, these privileges, instead of making you, in a spiritual sense, to excel, have, from your great abuse of them, occasioned in you aggravated guilt.

The heavy charge, which the apostle brings against the Jews was no new one. He proceeds to show, from the divine oracles, that, many ages past, they had established their character for the greatest impiety and wickedness. “As it is written; there is none righteous; no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none, that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are all become unprofitable; there is none, that doeth good; no, not one.”\* “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips;”† “whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”‡ “Their feet are swift, to

\* Psa. xiv. 1-3.

† Psa. v. 9; cxl. 3.

‡ Psa. x. 7.

shed blood ; destruction and misery are in their ways ; and the way of peace they have not known.”\*

“ There is no fear of God before their eyes.”†

This, indeed, is a sad description of the ancient state of the Jews ; and, if any thing could have lowered the lofty pretensions of the generation of that people, whom the apostle addressed,—if any thing could have removed their prejudices, convinced them of their depravity, and shown them their need of the dispensation of the gospel, this description was well calculated to do it. For, it was manifestly extreme arrogance and blindness, in them, to think, that what was, thus, divinely asserted and recorded of their fathers, might not, with equal truth and justice, be affirmed of themselves. To remove all ground of confidence from the unbelieving Jew, and to deprive him of every shadow of excuse, the apostle reminds him, that, in this description, the people of God, Israel, and not another people, were meant. “ Now, we know, that what things the law,”—the Scripture,—“ saith, it saith to them, who are under the law,”—to the Jews ;—“ so that every mouth is stopped and all the world,”—Jews as well as Gentiles,—“ become guilty before God.” Because, “ by works of law, there shall no flesh,”—no man, whether Jew, or Gentile,—“ be justified in his sight. For, by law is the knowledge of sin.”

The apostle is now prepared to declare the gra-

\* Isa. lix. 7, 8.

† Psa. xxxvi. 1.

cious and glorious way of justification and acceptance, which God himself has devised, and opened up, for sinful, guilty, man ; and though, to the well-informed and candid Christian, there is, in the words, in which the apostle describes that way, neither obscurity nor uncertainty, it is, to the less informed, very important, to be reminded, that it is evident, the apostle is chiefly addressing the unbelieving Jew, whose prejudices, in favour of the law of Moses, were so deeply and inveterately rooted. That the apostle, though not exclusively, is yet, in this paragraph, especially addressing the unbelieving Jew, is evident, not only from the general scope of the subject, but also, and particularly, from his affirming, that the passages, now cited from the Scriptures, were evidently addressed to the Jews, and from the questions put a little below ; “ Is he the God of the Jews only ? Is he not also of the Gentiles ? ” The poor, blinded, Gentile, once convinced, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that the gospel is of divine origin, and divinely attested, will, by the light of that gospel, clearly see his sinful and lost state, and will, at once, and with all gratitude, accept the terms of justification and salvation proposed. But, not so the Jew. It is with the greatest difficulty, if at all, that he can be brought to believe, that God himself can either alter, or improve, his own dispensations.

It is also of importance to the less informed reader, to be reminded, that, in this passage, “ law ” means,

not merely the Mosaic ceremonial law, as distinguished from the moral law, but divine law in general, whether written on tables of stone, or on the tablets of the human heart, but especially, and in its full extent, the Mosaic law, or dispensation. “But now the righteousness,” or justification, “of God, without the law, is manifested; being witnessed by the law and the prophets,”—by the Scriptures of the Old Testament,—“even the righteousness,” or justification, “of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all,”—to all Jews and all Gentiles,—“that believe; for there is no difference. For all,”—Jews and Gentiles,—“have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”—have failed, in establishing a right to the approbation of God, and to that eternal life and glory, which are the fruits of his approbation; “being justified freely by his grace,”—purely and wholly by the spontaneous, and undeserved, mercy, love, and goodness of God,—“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Having just mentioned, that the divine method of justification, revealed in the gospel, receives evidence and confirmation from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the apostle naturally proceeds to intimate, that the mercy-seat of the ancient dispensation was typical of Christ. The mercy-seat, or throne, with its attendant cherubim, made of pure gold, surmounted the ark of the covenant. On this mercy-throne rested the symbol of the special presence of

Jehovah. From this throne, the living and true God made his will known to his people. From this throne the people received divine counsel, to guide them. From this throne the Lord declared the sin and evil of transgressing his commandments. From this throne he revealed his great love to all that obeyed him. From this throne he gave all penitent transgressors the fullest assurance of mercy and grace. To this throne were directed the prayers, the vows, and the praises, of the people. And, as a further illustration of the words of the apostle, it must be observed, that, when the High Priest appeared before the mercy-seat, it was not without blood. A victim was sacrificed, on the occasion. The mercy-seat, or throne, then, was, under the Mosaic dispensation, a type; and Christ, under the dispensation of the gospel, is the anti-type. "Him God fore-ordained, to be a mercy-seat, through faith, by his blood; to declare,"—to manifest,—“his righteousness,” or justification, “for,”—in relation to,—“sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;—to manifest, at this time,”—that is, under the dispensation of the gospel,—“his righteousness,” or justification;—“that he might be just,” or gracious,—“and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”

Now, when we consider that Christ is God manifested in human nature,—that it is by him alone we become acquainted with the Father,—that it is by him alone the gracious purposes of God, towards us,

are revealed,—that he alone has brought life and immortality to light,—that, by him alone, the penitent sinner learns the way of forgiveness and of reconciliation,—that it is, by him alone, we are unerringly taught our duties,—and that, in the shedding of his blood, a perfect, acceptable, and final, sacrifice, was offered for us,—we must, at once, see the propriety of the metaphorical language of the apostle, in this place.

“Where is boasting, then?” Is there in the Jew, with all his advantages, as a member of the church of God, nothing of which he may boast,—nothing of which he may glory?—No; nothing. All boasting,—all glorying,—“is excluded. By what law?” By what method? “of works?” “Nay; but by the law,”—by the method,—“of faith. Therefore, we conclude, that a man,”—that a Jew,—“is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.”

“Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes; of the Gentiles also; seeing God is one, who will justify the circumcision,”—the Jews,—“by faith, and the uncircumcision,”—the Gentiles,—“through faith. Do we, then, make law void,”—do we abolish all law,—all manner of divine special dispensation,—“through faith? God forbid! Yea; we establish law.” We establish “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;”—we establish the law, or dispensation, of the gospel, with all its requirements.

It is of the greatest importance, that we should well understand the *nature* of the justification, of which the apostle here discourses ; and, to do so, we must steadily keep in view, that it is the Jew, strongly prejudiced, as he was, in favour of his own method of justification, he especially addresses. At Mount Sinai, the Jew received that law by the perfect observance of which, in all its parts, he was to be justified, and to have eternal life, and, for the breach of the least requirement of which, he was to be condemned, and to perish ; and, thus, the law became the ministration of death ;—the commandment, which was ordained unto life, was, from the frailty of man, even in his most strenuous endeavours to observe it, found to be unto death. But, notwithstanding, it served an ultimate purpose of unspeakable importance. It became a schoolmaster, who by his rigorous discipline, and mortal severity, prepared those, who were under him, and who, escaping the strong infatuation, which possessed the many, chose not to cower and perish, under the rod, for Christ and the justification of his gospel.

Christ, in virtue of his obedience unto death, and by the appointment of the Father, purchased for mankind a restoration from that death, which the disobedience of our first, common, parent, Adam, brought upon himself, and which, by the divine decree, was entailed on all his posterity. Thus, Christ effected for mankind “justification,” as the apostle,



in the sequel, calls it, “ of life.” Those, to whom the gospel was originally addressed, whether Jews, or Gentiles, fully established their right to that justification, by receiving Jesus, as the promised Messiah, or Son of God, and by believing in their hearts, that God did, indeed, raise him from the dead ; and it is by the same profession and belief that all men, whether Jews, or Gentiles, in all ages, when, from their original state, they embrace the gospel, acquire the same glorious right. “ If thou shalt confess, with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe, in thine heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For, with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness,” or justification, “ and, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.”\*

Either Jews, or Gentiles, once brought within the pale of the Christian Church, their posterity, in all succeeding generations, continue in the enjoyment of justification, and of all other Christian privileges, while they continue in the profession of their fathers ; as the posterity of Abraham, in their successive generations, continued to enjoy the privileges of their peculiar covenant, in virtue of their descent and profession.

In virtue of their justification, Christians enjoy other spiritual privileges, of a nature the most valuable and honourable. By it, they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar

\* Rom. x. 9, 10.

people. The glorious Creator and God of the universe is their heavenly Father ; and they are his children ;—they are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. And from these privileges, it is evident, innumerable, inestimable, benefits must accrue.

From the portion of the epistle now considered, it clearly appears that the justification of the Christian is, on the part of God, purely and wholly free, and, on the part of man, entirely independent of any works, and of any merit. In amplification, however, of the joyful subject, the words of the apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, may with profit be added. “ By grace ye are saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ;—it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” \*

That the Christian has no merit from the *faith*, by which he enjoys the grace, in which he stands, is very evident, from the very nature of the case. When a sovereign grants to a criminal, condemned to die, a pardon, his life, and all his former privileges, as a subject, what *merit* has the criminal, in *believing* that those joyful things are granted to him ? Or, what merit has a nobleman, whose ancestors, after a long and just forfeiture, were, by an act of grace, on the part of the sovereign, happily restored to their

\* Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

original state, in believing that he is born to his high rank, great privileges, and extensive possessions, and has an unquestionable legal right to the enjoyment of them? It is very evident, that neither the one nor the other has any merit in his belief. And if they have not, what merit has the Christian, *in believing*, that he is justified freely, by the grace of God, through the redemption, that is in Christ, and has a full and clear right to all the other inestimable privileges, and blessings, which accompany his justification?

Here, we ought not to omit observing, that the justification, of which the apostle here treats, is also frequently and very appropriately denominated, by him, a *salvation*; and it must be most carefully remembered, that the justification here announced is not that final justification of the righteous, which will take place, in the day of judgment, but a justification, which we enjoy in our present state of probation, in this world, and which, not only will not secure to us eternal salvation, but will even aggravate our guilt, and will cause our punishment to be more signal, if we do not work out our salvation, by perseverance in well-doing, and especially if we lead a life positively bad.—Our final justification, and the consequent salvation, it is expressly and clearly declared to us, will depend on our works, or the course of our lives. In the preceding part of this chapter, we are distinctly and solemnly informed, that, in the

day when God shall judge the secrets of men, it is they, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, that shall enjoy eternal life ; while they, who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be the objects of indignation and wrath. " We must," saith the apostle to the Corinthians, " all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, whether it be good or bad."\* Our Lord himself assures us, that it is not they, who merely profess to honour him, however great either their privilege, or their gifts, may be, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they, who do the will of God ; and he even specifies some of the works, which are to be rewarded with an entrance into the kingdom prepared for the righteous. It is of the justification, which ends in this eternal salvation, that the apostle James speaks in his epistle, and not of the justification, of which the apostle here treats. Inattention to this distinction, and to the limited nature of the justification, of which the latter treats, has been the cause of much confusion of ideas, on the subject, of much unchristian disputation, and of effects of the most injurious nature, on the lives of Christians.

We now enjoy that justification, which alone is compatible with our state of probation ; and it is unquestionably a justification of unspeakable value.


\* 2 Cor. v. 10.

To the believing Jew, it is a consideration the most joyful, and, in the highest degree calculated to kindle his gratitude and adoration, that he is not now, as his fathers were, under the law of sin and death, but under the law of the spirit of life ; and that he has received, not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, Abba, Father ! And when we, believing Gentiles, reflect on our deliverance from the deplorable state of alienation, ignorance, and despair, in which our ancestors lived, on our reconciliation to God, our heavenly Father, on our free justification, before him, through the redemption that is in his Son, on our adoption as the children of God, and on our prospects of a future glorious life and immortality, we cannot but see and feel, that we are under the strongest obligations to offer unto God, our Saviour, the sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, and adoration continually.

Finally ; it merits our particular attention, that the apostle declares, that the chief privilege, enjoyed by the ancient people of God, was the possession of the divine oracles,—the Holy Scriptures. For, if that was their chief privilege, we, in possessing, not only those oracles, but also those additional oracles, in which life and immortality, and the whole scheme of the dispensation of grace are revealed, must have a treasure inestimable. Let us be careful duly to appreciate the divine oracles. Let us beware of giving the preference to the traditions of men. Let us ever

remember, that, in every thing essential, they are clear and perfect. Let us cherish a deep sense of their efficiency, to make us wise unto salvation. If human writings,—the dictates of the human mind,—effect such wonderful things as we know they do;—if they so greatly enlighten and improve our minds, and so powerfully and beneficially affect our hearts;—if, by the light and guidance of merely human writings, mankind are so greatly benefited, in civil government, and in the arts and sciences;—if, with the aid of those writings, we so confidently and surely traverse the wide and trackless ocean, and so safely arrive at the desired haven;—if, by those writings the secret systems and great glories of the heavens are so marvellously disclosed to us;—if the power and beneficial effects of human writings be such, what limit can we assign to the power and efficiency of the divine oracles,—to the Scriptures, or writings, which have been dictated by the Spirit of God, when duly studied, and reduced to practice? Is it not reasonable to believe, that the divine oracles, when we open our minds to the truths, which they contain, and our hearts to their influence, are perfectly able to secure both our social and individual happiness, in our present state?

Is it not reasonable to believe, that if we make a due use of the divine knowledge, which they contain, we shall be unerringly guided over the ocean of life, and be safely conducted to that joyful haven, which



all so eagerly desire to reach? Is it not reasonable to believe, that, if we are well versed in the sublime science, which they so unerringly teach, the mysteries and glories of heaven will be infallibly revealed to us, to that extent, to which it is now good for man to know them? It is evident, that the neglect, and consequent ignorance, of human writings, would unavoidably lead to universal barbarism, confusion, and misery, of the most deplorable nature; and, if these would be the effects of such neglect, is it not reasonable to think,—is it not certain—that effects unspeakably more deplorable would inevitably follow, from the neglect, and consequent ignorance, of those divine writings, which contain the oracles of God?

## LECTURE V.

## ROMANS, IV.

IN this chapter the apostle proceeds in his demonstration of justification freely by the grace of God, by faith. His design is, to convince, and to win the unbelieving Jews, to confirm, in their faith, those of that nation, who had embraced the gospel, and, in doing so, to instruct, and to encourage, the believing Gentiles. The argument and illustration, which he uses, are powerfully and admirably fitted to accomplish his purpose. In the context, he had asserted, that the gospel method of justification had "excluded boasting," or glorying; but, in the preceding part of the epistle, to the questions of the Jew, "What advantage then hath the Jew? Or, what profit is there of circumcision?" he replied, "Much every way." Circumcision profiteth, if thou keep the law. This prepares us for the question, or objection, to the gospel method of justification, with which this chapter commences;—an objection evidently purporting to be made by an unbelieving Jew, which, it is very probable the apostle had often heard, from the un-



believing Jews, and which, in the depths of their prejudices, that blinded people imagined to be unanswerable.


“What shall we say, then, that Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found?” Or, as in the original, “What, then, do we say Abraham our father obtained, by the flesh?” Did he not obey the commandment of God, in his observance of the rite of circumcision? Did he not, besides, in all respects, yield the obedience, which that rite bound him to render? And, if he did, was not this meritorious, and a ground of glorying before God? “For, if Abraham was justified by works he hath whereof to boast,” or glory. “Nay,” replies the apostle, “not before God,”—not in the estimation of God. “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham *believed God*; and *it was counted to him* for righteousness,” or justification. Thus Abraham was justified simply and purely by faith; and, as we read a little farther on, “justification is of faith; that it might be by *grace*,” or unmerited favour. Now, the apostle affirms, that justification by works is founded on a principle entirely different from that of faith and grace. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of *grace*, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness.”

Here, let us observe how comprehensively and admirably the *mention*, which the apostle makes of the

justification of the “ungodly,” illustrates his subject. For, the term has a reference both to Abraham, who, before he left his native country, was an idolater, and to the unbelieving Gentiles, who, before their conversion, were so entirely devoted to their idols. Both parties, when received into covenant with God, were placed in the very same circumstances; and the objection of the unbelieving Jew, against the reception of the Gentiles, into the Church of God, without receiving the rite of circumcision, and without obedience to the ceremonial law, was altogether unreasonable and unjust.

In illustration and confirmation of the doctrine of justification by grace, through faith, as taught in this passage, let it be observed, that, in a subsequent part of the epistle the apostle again states it, in terms substantially the same. Speaking of the reception of the believing Jews, into the covenant of the gospel, he says, “If it be of grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace;”—grace has changed its nature, and is misnamed. “But, if it be of works, then, is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work;”—work is essentially different and wrongly termed.

The apostle further illustrates and confirms the doctrine of justification freely by the grace of God, through faith, by a quotation from the writings of the inspired royal Psalmist, the type and father of the promised and expected Messiah,—an authority, by



which the deepest prejudices only could have prevented the unbelieving Jew from being convinced. By what method, indeed, can he, who has transgressed the law of God, be justified, but by the free grace, or unmerited favour, of God? There is evidently none. But happy is the man, who knows, that his gracious Creator is ready to forgive the chief of penitent, returning, sinners, and to regard him as justified, and who relies on the grace of God, who thus justifies. “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness, without works; saying, blessed are they, whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man, to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”\*

Here, the attentive reader will observe, that imputation of righteousness, forgiveness of iniquities, covering of sins, and not to impute sin, are equivalent and convertible terms, and that both separatively and collectively they mean justification, freely by grace.

The apostle now demonstrates, that the great and happy privilege of the forgiveness of sins, or justification freely by grace, is, in the divine dispensations, not confined to the Jews only, but extended also to the Gentiles, from the state and time, in which Abraham was justified. “Cometh this blessedness on the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumci-

\* Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.

sion also? For we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How, then, was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?" Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. It was not until several years after his justification, that "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness," or justification, "of the faith, which he had, yet being uncircumcised." And he received neither the sign, nor the thing signified, merely on his own account, but "that he might be the father," and exemplar, "of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also;—even a father of the circumcision, not only to them, who are of the circumcision, but also to them who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised."

The mention here made of the spiritual paternity divinely conferred on Abraham, and of the blessings divinely destined for his spiritual posterity, leads the apostle to the next observation. "For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Neither the promise, that Abraham should be the father of many nations, nor the promise, that in him, all the families of the earth should be blessed, was made on account of obedience to the law, but by justification by faith, or by grace. Justification by works, and the restriction of it to those, who were under the law, the apostle

observes, would have destroyed the effects of faith, and would have annulled the promises. "For, if they, which are of the law, be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect." He shows, that this would be a morally necessary consequence ; "because the law worketh wrath," or death. How the law worketh wrath, or is found to be unto death, is fully shown in the sequel, and will form the subject of another discourse. But "where there is no law,"—as in justification by faith,—“there is no transgression, and, accordingly, neither condemnation, nor punishment.” Therefore it is of faith,—“the inheritance or blessings, conferred on Abraham, and on his spiritual posterity,” is of faith,—“that it might be by grace ; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed ;—not to that only, which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us,”—believing Jews and Gentiles,—“*all* ; as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.”

Here the apostle draws our attention to the great strength of Abraham's faith, in the power and faithfulness of God, by reminding us of those physical circumstances, in which that patriarch and Sarah stood, and which, in themselves, were greatly calculated to weaken his faith. When he believed, he was constituted “the father of us all, before him,”—in the purpose of him,—“whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things, which be not, as though they were ; who,

against hope, believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations ; according to that, which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And not being weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not, at the promise of God, through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving,"—by his firm faith,—“glory to God ; and, being fully persuaded, that, what he had promised he was able to perform.” Then, the apostle emphatically adds ;—“therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

The apostle concludes his observations relative to Abraham, with an invaluable and most forcible practical application of the subject. “Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe,”—rather who do believe,—“on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

In discoursing on the subject, of which the apostle Paul here treats, it is evidently necessary to show, that his doctrine, on this important point, is reconcilable with that of the apostle James. For, to those, who are but imperfectly acquainted with the writings of those apostles, their words may seem irreconcilable. An attentive and candid perusal, then, of these apostles will clearly show, that the justifica-

tion, of which the apostle Paul treats in this epistle, is a justification, which we enjoy, in this life, simply and purely in consequence of our Christian belief and profession. The effects of this justification are these. As members of the church of God, we are delivered from that ancient dispensation of inflexible and uncompromising law, to the least transgression of which was annexed the penalty of death, and which, accordingly, though ordained unto life, was eventually found to be a ministration of death ; and we enjoy a dispensation of mercy and grace. We, Gentile Christians are saved from that deplorable state of spiritual distance and alienation, in which our fathers were. We are the children of God,—heirs of God, and joint heirs, with Jesus Christ, our Lord ; and we have the glorious prospect of a triumphant resurrection from the dead, and of eternal life and unspeakable happiness.

But, though we possess these great and invaluable privileges, the apostle clearly teaches, that, being in this world in a state of probation, we may, by sin and impenitence, reject the counsel of God against ourselves, render our privileges of no avail, receive the grace of God in vain, and come short of the glorious rest promised to us, and prepared for us ; either as disobedient profligate, and unnatural, children render it sadly necessary for a great wealthy, and affectionate, father to deprive them of the rich inheritance, destined for them, or as wicked and re-

bellicious noblemen are deprived of those honours and privileges, which their sovereign had conferred on their fathers and had destined for themselves, and draw down on their own heads the extreme punishment of the law.

That we enjoy justification in this state, and that the terms, on which we are justified, are those, which have now been stated is evident from the concluding words of the passage before us, in which the apostle says, that righteousness will be imputed to us, who believe on him that raised our Lord from the dead ; —words which are clearly equivalent to a passage in the sequel,\* in which the apostle more directly and fully declares, that, if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and if we believe in our hearts, that God hath raised him from the dead, we shall be saved ; for, that, thus, we believe unto righteousness, or justification, and make confession unto salvation ; and, independently of the knowledge, which we have on the subject, either from other parts of the writings of this apostle, or from the writings of other inspired men, it is evident from this epistle, that, in consequence of our Christian belief and profession, we do indeed enjoy the inestimable privileges now stated ; but, yet, that those privileges we may abuse, and render ineffectual, in the end.

Now, the justification, of which the apostle James treats, is evidently different from that, which is

\* Ch. x. 9, 10.




taught in this epistle. For, from the grounds of the latter, *works* are entirely and expressly *excluded*; and the apostle James as expressly affirms, that Abraham was justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son, on the altar; or, what was equivalent, when, in obedience to the divine command, he had resolutely prepared to sacrifice that dearest of all victims; and, consequently, that we, his children, also, are justified in the same way. The one is primary and fundamental, and forms the ground of the great privileges and glorious prospects, which we enjoy, in our present state; the other, though different, is yet a justification, which accrues from this one, which is inseparable from it, and which, independently of it, could never have existed. Or, the justification taught by the apostle James may be regarded as our present, primary, free, justification, in an advanced stage, and confirmed, and rendered effectual and final, by our making that faith, in consequence of which we possess it, “perfect by works.” For the apostle, having said, that Abraham was justified by works, when he offered up Isaac, on the altar, adds, “And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see, then, that *by works* a man is justified, and not by faith *only*.”\*

Although, as has been already observed it is, in

\* Ch. ii. 21, &c.

the portion of the epistle now considered, the chief design of the apostle, to obviate the objections, and to remove the prejudices, of the unbelieving Jews, against the gospel, and to confirm those of that nation who had embraced it, in just and clear views of it, the passage is, notwithstanding highly calculated to instruct, to confirm, and to sanctify, us believing Gentiles, the children of Abraham, according to the divine promise. The gospel, or what was equivalent to it, we know, was preached to Abraham ; and we also know, that what is recorded of Abraham was written, not on his account only, but also for our benefit.

Let us, then, attentively consider the analogy, which the case of Abraham bears to our own. The Lord made, to that eminent patriarch, great and precious promises, which were to be fulfilled, at a future, and partly at a remote, period ; and he firmly and devoutly believed, that God would, in due time, infallibly fulfil his promises. Addicted, from his education and from the example of his kindred, though it must be admitted he, in the earlier part of his life, was, to idolatrous practices, he had, notwithstanding, evidently been a careful and devout observer of the omnipotence of God, as displayed in creation and providence, and had, as evidently, made edifying and pious reflections on the history of the past dispensations of God towards mankind ; and, accordingly, when he received a promise from God,



that he should have a son, by Sarah, and that his posterity should be countless, as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the sea-shore, although, in regard to the prospect of having an offspring, both himself and Sarah were dead, he readily and firmly believed, that the promise would be fulfilled.

The Lord was pleased with the faith of the patriarch ; he accounted it to him for righteousness ; and, in due time, he gave him, by Sarah, a son ;—but an *only* son. Now, mark the sequel ! This son,—this *only* son,—by whom alone he expected the fulfilment of the divine promise, that his posterity should be countless, the Lord mysteriously and marvellously commanded to be offered to himself, as a sacrifice ;—an act of obedience the difficulty and painfulness of which, though evident to every one, can adequately be estimated, only by the fond father of an only child, for whom is destined the greatest and most glorious inheritance, which can, in this world, be enjoyed, by whom his own fame and honour are to be perpetuated, to the end of time, and by whom, it is justly expected, the world will be greatly benefited. Yet, even this sacrifice the patriarch hesitated not to offer. He knew, that he, who had conferred the gift, had a right to recall it ; and he was, besides, convinced, that the omnipotent Creator was able to restore him from the dead ; from whom, in a manner, the son, in deriving his being from himself

and Sarah, notwithstanding, the greatest physical improbabilities, was at first received.

An act of obedience so unparalleled could not fail to be followed by a declaration of the divine approbation; nor did it. The covenant, which had previously been made with this excellent father of believers was, now, with an inestimable addition to it, renewed, and, in the most solemn manner, that can be imagined, ratified. “The angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven, the second time, and said, By myself I have sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that, in blessing, I will bless thee, and, in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand, which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and, in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”\*

But, although the resolution to sacrifice Isaac, and the preparation for offering that beloved victim, were the most signal and memorable acts of obedience, in the life of Abraham they were not the only ones. He experienced various other trials, both domestic and external, in which the same trust, in the divine power and faithfulness, and the same devout regard and submission to the divine authority, characterised his conduct. His whole life, indeed, since he was called

\* Gen. ch. xxii. v. 15—18.


from his idolatrous native land, was an undeviating course of obedience to the will of God.

The analogy, then, or rather the resemblance, which our state bears to that of Abraham is this. The Lord made to him great and glorious promises. He believed God; his faith was imputed to him for righteousness; and the promises were solemnly repeated and ratified. We, on testimony manifestly divine, believe, that God raised up Jesus, his own son, from the dead, and openly acknowledge the son, as our Lord; and, in virtue of our belief and profession, righteousness is imputed to us;—we are accounted justified;—for Jesus, the Son of God, was delivered, for our offences, and was raised again, for our justification. The effects of our justification are, that we are now the children of God,—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and that we have the promise and prospect of a glorious resurrection from the dead, and of life, immortality, and eternal happiness.

Now, let us consider the firm foundation on which our faith stands. We have the bright example of our father Abraham, in believing the divine promises. But, in reference to his faith, we have what is still more edifying and important;—we have the knowledge of the fulfilment of the promises, which were made to him. For, we are eyewitnesses of the fact, that both the natural and the spiritual children of the illustrious father and exemplar of believers are

countless as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is on the sea-shore ; and we know, that, in his offspring, Jesus Christ, our Lord, all the nations of the earth, either already are, or, in process of time, are to be, blessed. In these things, then, we have manifestly still stronger grounds for our faith than had Abraham for his. For he, when first he believed, had for the foundation of his faith, only the promise ; and he afterwards saw the promise fulfilled, only in part ; but we see it, if not finally and entirely, at least, in a marvellous and inestimable degree now fulfilled. We have the clearest and strongest proofs, that, in fulfilling his promises, the Lord is neither unfaithful nor remiss. We see, that no lapse, either of years, or of ages, can affect either his power or his faithfulness, in fulfilling his promises. We see, that, with him a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.

Let us, the promised spiritual children of Abraham adore God, our heavenly Father, for loving and blessing us, in a manner so unexampled and marvellous, as to deliver his own Son to the ignominious death of the cross, for our sins, and for raising him up again from the dead for our justification. If, in the distant prospect of our day and state, our illustrious father Abraham rejoiced, well may we rejoice, in the actual possession of them. Let the divine faithfulness and goodness, in the fulfilment of the promise made to our father Abraham be the fre-



quent subject of our meditations ; and let the manifold and strong proofs, which we have of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead be the frequent subject of our most attentive consideration. For, in his resurrection, followed, as it was, by the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, we have, not only a proof and seal of our justification and acceptance with God, but also an example of our own future resurrection, and a pledge of immortality, and of eternal happiness and glory.

But, let us walk in the steps of our spiritual father, not only in his faith, but also in his obedience and submission to the divine will. His was a state of probation ; and so is ours. His faith was made perfect by works ; let ours be the same. Our trials, like his, may sometimes be severe and mysterious ; but, from his, as well as from other examples innumerable, recorded in the divine oracles, we know, that, from the severest trials, God will provide a way of deliverance, that we may be able to bear them. Great and glorious, indeed, was the reward of the trust and obedience of Abraham ; and unspeakably great and glorious also will be that of ours. Our present trials, if we pass through them, with trust and obedience, will assuredly work for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory !

Unhappy are they, in the present state, and fearful are their prospects, in relation to the state to come, who either abuse, or neglect, the privileges,

which they possess, in consequence of their Christian belief and profession ! It had been better for them, that they had never possessed their advantages. But, it should never be forgotten, that, to the penitent, returning, sinner, however enormous and heinous his sins may have been, the doctrine of justification freely by grace, through faith, is full of encouragement, consolation, peace, and joy ! If the wicked and ungodly does indeed forsake his ways, and, if he turns to the Lord, he shall, at the hands of a gracious and faithful God, experience the blessedness of the man, whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.



## LECTURE VI.

## ROMANS, V.

HAVING, in the preceding part of this epistle, proved that both Gentiles and Jews had become exceedingly wicked and ungodly,—having declared, that it was not possible, they should be justified, before God, by works, but, on the contrary, that they deserved signal punishment,—having affirmed, that, in the dispensation of the gospel, both Jews and Gentiles are justified freely by the grace, or unmerited goodness, of God,—and having illustrated this method of justification, by a reference to the memorable case of Abraham,—the apostle here proceeds to give an ample and most cheering view of the nature and consequences of our justification, by the grace of God, through the redemption, that is in Christ.

That we may fully and profitably understand the apostle, we must bear in mind, that, in the words, which immediately follow, he addresses those, who had recently been converted to Christ, from their Gentile state,—that he addresses them collectively, and as actuated by true Christian principles, and

leading lives suitable to their profession,—and that those original believers represented the whole Christian church, through all future ages, to whom, accordingly, as well as to them, those words are also clearly applicable. It likewise ought to be observed, that the apostle here regards himself, and speaks of himself, as a member of the Gentile Christian church;—evidently because, by the new covenant, all distinction between Jews and Gentiles is abolished, and because he was divinely appointed to be the special apostle of the Gentiles.

In the sequel of the epistle, the apostle declares, that whosoever confesseth with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believeth in his heart, that God raised him from the dead, shall be saved, and adds, that, with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, or justification, and that, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation. By this belief, then, and profession,—a profession, it must ever be remembered, which implies obedience to our Lord,—the first converts to the gospel obtained, and, by this belief and profession, all succeeding generations, in the Christian Church, continue to enjoy, justification before God.

Of our justification, thus, obtained, the consequences are inestimable. “Being justified by faith we have peace with God.” In our Gentile state, we renounced our God and heavenly Father, and were enemies to him, in our minds, by wicked works. We

were aliens from the commonwealth and invaluable privileges of his people. We were spiritually far off from God, and were justly the children, or objects, of wrath. But now, in virtue of our belief and profession, we are reconciled to God, have peace with him, and are the objects of his love. We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; and this is "through Jesus Christ our Lord." It was he, who reconciled us to God. It was he, who, by his own blood, brought us nigh to our heavenly Father. It was "by him, that we obtained access into the grace, in which we stand;" and we ought ever to be mindful, that it was by him alone, and exclusively of all merit on our part, we became the objects of that inestimable and marvellous grace, or divine favour.

The foundation of our faith is so solid and immovable, that, when we duly estimate the strength of it, entertain just views of the terms of our justification, and render due obedience to our divine Lord, it is neither with apprehension, nor with doubt, that we look forward to a future state. It is far otherwise; "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." We rejoice in the full expectation of that eternal life, glory, honour, and peace, which the Son of God has purchased for us, and revealed in his gospel.

It is not merely in the season of health, strength, and prosperity, that these our Christian principles enable us to rejoice. When they have their due and

intended influence on us, they enable us, in this our state of probation, to rejoice, in the hope of glory, not only under the pressure of mental and bodily sufferings, but even in death itself. The Christian not only knows, that his present sorrows and sufferings must be but of comparatively short duration, but also, that it is for the most gracious ends, that his heavenly Father permits him to be subjected to them. He practically remembers, that our light affliction, transitory as it is, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. “Not only so,”—continues the apostle,—“but we rejoice in tribulations; knowing, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience,”—*evidence*, rather, of being what we should be,—“and experience hope.”

Now, in the Christian converts of the apostolic age, this hope, or expectation, was neither groundless nor vain; and however confidently they might have entertained it, they could have had no cause to be ashamed of it. Those converts, whether Gentiles, or Jews, received the promised miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, as the unquestionable sign and seal of their being, the one received, and the other confirmed, as the people of God, of their right to the invaluable privileges connected with that high relation, and of their being the objects of the special love of God their heavenly Father. “Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given

us." As in other similar places, the language here used, it may be observed, is metaphorical. The miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit are represented as having been poured into the hearts, or minds, of the believers ; and, along with those gifts and powers, a sense of the love of God towards those, who had received them. But it is of the greatest importance, that we should remember, that those original converts received the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, not only as the seal of their own Christian privileges, but also as that of the privileges of all succeeding generations, in the church ; and, accordingly, although those gifts and powers, which constituted that seal, were soon withdrawn, they clearly prove *our* right to the privileges of the people of God, and as clearly show, that we are the objects of his love. Those converts were but the first fruits ; and if the first fruits were, in that manner, so manifestly consecrated to God, and so unquestionably proved to be the objects of his love, so also assuredly is the mass.

But the miraculous gifts and powers, with which the original converts to the gospel were endowed not only constituted a sign and seal of their right to the privileges of the covenant of grace, and of their being the objects of the special love of God ; they also made them fully and infallibly acquainted with the great doctrines of the gospel, which, to all, who know and believe them, so clearly evince the matchless,

marvellous, love of God to man. These doctrines, accordingly, the apostle now brings forward to demonstrate the love of God towards us. “For, when we were yet,”—in our Gentile state,—“without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.”

This manifestation of the love of God, the apostle declares, is unexampled among men. Among them, a man will not die for the benefit of a wicked man; and if, by a great effort of generosity and magnanimity, one dies for a good man, it is a thing, which rarely happens, and which, when it does, excites the wonder of the world. But, in contrast with this, the love of God, in giving up his own Son to an ignominious death, for a wicked and ungodly world, rises marvellously before our eyes; and our ineffably gracious God would have us fix our deepest attention on the unparalleled transaction. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.” “*Scarcely*,” observes the apostle. “For,”—adds he,—“*peradventure* for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet,”—in our Gentile state,—“sinners,”—great and notorious sinners,—“Christ died for us.”

The resurrection of our Lord from the dead clearly demonstrated, that God, our heavenly Father, has accepted his obedience to death, as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins; and, as already observed, we appropriate the benefits of this sacrifice,—we are

justified before God,—in virtue of our belief in the resurrection of the Son of God, and by devoting ourselves to the service of his Son, as our own rightful Lord. The apostle here emphatically reminds us, that we enjoy this justification “*now*,”—in our present state; and he justly argues, that strong and clear as the proofs are, which we have of our justification, we have, in this our present justification, a stronger proof and pledge of our deliverance from future punishment, and of our being appointed to obtain eternal salvation. “Much more, then, being *now* justified by his blood, we shall, through him, be saved from wrath.” The strength and certainty of this pledge he further demonstrates, by showing, that from our being brought from our Gentile state of alienation and hostility, at the great and marvellous price of the death of the Son of God, to a condition of acceptance and peace with God, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that we shall be eternally saved, by the life of his Son, who is now invested with full authority and power, to give eternal life, to whom he will. “For, if, when we were *enemies*, we were *reconciled* to God, by the *death* of his *Son*, *much more being reconciled*, we shall be *saved* by his *life*.”

But, in addition to our inestimable state of present justification, and of confident and well-founded expectation of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace, the apostle reminds us, that there is still another

very high privilege, which now belongs to us. The Jews, in virtue of the spécial covenant, in which they stood, could glory in God, as, in a peculiar sense, their own God ; and here the apostle affirms, that we, Gentile Christians, also, who, in our original state, were far from having any such pretensions, may *now glory* in God, as our *own* God, and that it is by Jesus Christ, our Lord, we have obtained this happy privilege. “ And not only so, but we also glory in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have *now* obtained the reconciliation.”

Thus, we have, in some measure, considered the inexpressibly cheering account, which the apostle here gives us of the nature and effects of our justification, by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. We now proceed to take a view of the marvellous extent of those effects.

The extent of the divine grace, and of the salvation, that is in Christ, the apostle reveals to us, by declaring, that Adam was a type of Christ. He affirms, that as, in consequence of the transgression of Adam, all mankind die, so, in virtue of the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ all mankind shall be restored to life. “ In reference to this,\* as by one man sin entered into the world, and death, by sin, and so death passed upon all men, through him, by whom all sinned,” [so the gift of life shall be

\* It is, thus, the best critics render these words from the original.





bestowed upon all men, through him, by whom all men obtain justification of life.]\*

We cannot reasonably doubt, that the apostle knew, by immediate divine revelation, that it is in consequence of the original transgression of Adam, that all his posterity die; yet here he deems it proper to argue, that it is manifest, it must necessarily be so; and he founds his argument on the universal mortality, which prevailed from Adam to Moses, in whose time the law,—the ministration of death,—came. “For, until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed,”—not so imputed as to bring death upon the sinner,—“when there *is* no law,”—no specific law, with the punishment of death annexed to the violation of it. “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,”—a period in which no such law existed,—“even over them, that had not sinned, after the similitude of the transgression of Adam,”—who had not sinned, by disobeying a commandment having annexed to the breach of it the punishment of death. It, therefore, necessarily follows, that it is in consequence of the original transgression of Adam, that all mankind die.

Adam, then, the apostle affirms, was a type, or “figure, of him, that was to come.” He was a type of him in this;—that the transgression of Adam is so imputed to all his posterity, that, in consequence

\* The ellipsis, plainly, must be, thus, supplied.

of that transgression, they all die, and that the righteousness, or obedience unto death, of Christ is so imputed to all mankind, that, in consequence of that obedience, they shall all be restored to life. But, he very fully and forcibly teaches, that Adam is a type of Christ, only in the *manner*, not in the *extent*, of what he occasioned to mankind ;—that the analogy consists in the *mode*, not in the *measure*. “ But not as the offence so is the free gift. For, if, through the offence of one, the many died, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ hath abounded unto the many.” By Adam, we lose life ; and our dust returns to its kindred element ; and, in this, we do but forfeit a gift, to the possession of which we had no original right, and which our Creator might, in any event, have either continued with us, or, at any time, have, without injustice, withdrawn. But by Christ, we not only have the life, which, by Adam, we forfeited and lost, restored, but our restored life will be eternal, and ineffably happy and glorious.

There is another most important respect, in which we are here taught the analogy does not subsist between what Adam has occasioned to us and what Christ has effected for us ; and this discrepancy, also, is highly illustrative of the exuberance of the divine grace. *One* transgression only,—*one* act of sin only,—became the cause of condemnation to Adam, and to all his posterity ; but the gift of divine


grace, by Christ, not only saves us from the effects of the transgression of Adam, but also justifies us from sins in number indefinite. "And not, as by one that sinned, so is the gift. For the judgment was for one (offence) to condemnation ; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." How this takes place, also, the apostle here shows. "For, if, by one man's offence, death reigned, by one, much more they, which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life, by one, Jesus Christ."

Having, thus, shown the important points of discrepancy, in the analogy there is between the effects of the transgression of Adam and the obedience of Christ, and how greatly that discrepancy displays the exuberance of the grace of God, the apostle concludes, with a general, but clear and forcible, inference, relative to the general analogy ;—an inference, to which any one, who may find difficulty in understanding, either the words, or the argument, of the passage, would do well to attend ; because that inference, or general conclusion, entirely and manifestly removes any obscurity, in which, it may be supposed, the passage is involved. "Wherefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." These are the effects of what Adam and Christ have respectively caused to all mankind ; and, how they respec-

tively caused these effects, we are next informed. "For, as by one man's disobedience the many,"—that is, all men,—“were made sinners,”—or regarded and treated as sinners,—“so, by the obedience of one, shall the many,”—or all men,—“be made righteous,”—or regarded and treated as such.

From the time of Adam to that of Moses,—a period during which no specific law, having annexed to the violation of it the punishment of death, existed, death, as the apostle has observed, reigned, universally over mankind; and hence he proves, that, during that period, all men died, not for their own sins, but on account of the transgression of Adam. But this could not be said of the reign of death from Moses to Christ. In the time of Moses, law,—a law similar to that, under which Adam was originally placed,—was introduced;—a law, with the punishment of death annexed to the violation of it;—annexed to the least breach of any of its precepts. That law said; “Do this and live;” and “Cursed is every one, who continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” From human infirmity and sinfulness, therefore, and from the consequent moral impossibility of perfect obedience to its requirements, that law became the ministration of death; and, under it, men became liable to death for their *own* personal transgressions of the law.

Now, here the apostle informs us of the end, for



which the law was again introduced. “ The law entered, that the offence might abound.” But, from these words, it assuredly cannot for a moment be supposed, that, by the introduction of law, it was the purpose of a Holy God to cause the increase of sin, in those, who were subjected to that law. It was for the very opposite, and a most gracious, end, that it was introduced. It was introduced to demonstrate the exceeding sinfulness, great prevalence, and destructive nature, of sin. It was constituted a school-master to prepare, men, by its strictness and mortal severity, for Christ, for grace, and for holiness. Accordingly, we have from the apostle the following unspeakably consolatory and precious declaration. “ But where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

In this passage, relative to the introduction of law, it may be observed, the apostle especially and evidently addresses the Jewish Christians; while it is as evident, that he intended, it should also edify all Gentile Christians;—a purpose, which it is most powerfully and clearly calculated to serve.

The portion of the epistle, which we have now considered, leads us to some reflections the most important and the most joyful, that can occupy the mind of man. We, Gentile Christians, who trust in the Lord Jesus, and obey him,—we, whose fathers,

by wilful ignorance, and by all manner of impiety and wickedness, had rendered themselves the objects of the just displeasure of God, and of punishment,—are now in a state of peace with God;—in a state of peace with the omnipotent God, who called the universe into existence, and by whose wise and good providence it is, in all its parts, constantly governed! We are adopted into his family! He is our father; and we are his sons and daughters! We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with his own now glorified Son! What true Christian can reflect on this without joy unspeakable! But glory eternal be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is not merely on account of the privileges and blessings, which we *now* enjoy,—great and invaluable, unquestionably, as they are,—that we have reason to rejoice! Our great, special, cause of joy is, the expectation of future and eternal glory, honour, and peace, in the presence and company of Jesus Christ our Lord!

The circumstances, which the apostle here mentions, relative to our salvation, gloriously display to our view the marvellous love of God towards us. For, whether we consider the inestimable sacrifice, which was offered, to effect our salvation, or reflect on the wicked, alienated, and ungodly, state, in which we were, when that sacrifice was offered for us, we see the strongest reason to praise and adore God, our heavenly Father, with all our heart and mind!

How shall we sufficiently praise God, when we

consider, that our faith in our present justification and reconciliation is not blind credulity, but, on the contrary, a confidence, which rests on the solid foundation of those faithfully recorded miraculous and infallible attestations, which were divinely conferred on our fathers, in the Christian Church, and, with them, virtually on ourselves, their children! How shall we sufficiently adore our ineffably gracious God, when we think on the proof and pledge, which every good and pious Christian holds of future deliverance from that awful doom, to which, for the disobedience of our first common parents, we are all subjected, and of restoration to eternal life and felicity!—a proof and pledge to the strength of which we should all direct our closest and most earnest attention! For, as the apostle observes, if our justification and reconciliation were effected, when we were in a state of such enmity and hostility, and, if this was accomplished by such mournful means, as the death of the Son of God, it is most evident, that, now that we enjoy that happy state, we may look forward to our final salvation and eternal happiness with more than the confidence, with which any other event, that has not yet taken place, may be expected.

The observations of the apostle relative to Adam, as a type of Christ, lead to reflections of unspeakable interest and importance. Why our first common father was put in a state, which eventually brought all the sufferings of this life, and finally death, not

only on himself, but also on all his posterity, is a dispensation, which must, in our present state, ever remain a mystery. But, mysterious as the dispensation manifestly is, we ought to remember, that other appointments in the divine Providence, by which posterity, through many successive generations, often suffer, in this world, for the misdeeds of their ancestors, are analogous to it. For an explanation, then, of the ways of God, in both, we must await that state, in which we shall know even as we are known. It would be both unreasonable and impious in the thing formed to say to Him who formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Sufficient it is for us, to know, that we are now in a state of probation, preparatory to another, in which, what we shall experience will depend on our own present conduct ;—that the sufferings of this state, light and transitory as comparatively they are, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;—and that, like the apostle, who well understood our present advantages, we may regard even death itself as a privilege.

Finally ; what tongue can express, what imagination can conceive, the greatness of the interest and importance, which belong to the effect of the obedience to death of Christ, the second Adam ;—which belong to that dispensation, by which the countless millions of mankind, who either rest in their graves, or are entombed in the ocean, or have had their bodies consigned to destruction, in any other way,—



by which the countless millions of the human race, who are yet to be born and to die,—shall hear his voice, and, by a glorious resurrection, be restored to life and rendered immortal? Who can truly say,—who can justly think,—that our holy religion, of which this is the grand, fundamental, doctrine, is calculated to beget in us gloom and despondency? Who shall say, that the resurrection to be effected, and the life to be conferred, by our divine Lord, are not a just object of our most earnest and ardent desire? Can mortal man, who now is so anxiously careful to preserve, and to prolong, his life, be deemed either consistent, or rational, if he do not rejoice at the prospect of a restoration, from death, to a glorious life and immortality? Can he be said to act rationally and wisely, who does not now use every possible endeavour to attain the resurrection of the just? Does not a manifest infatuation possess all, who now pursue a course of wickedness and impiety, and who, in consequence of such a cause, must, after their resurrection, again forfeit their lives, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?

## LECTURE VII.

## ROMANS, VI.

It was fully to be expected, that, in the clear and comprehensive view, given, in this epistle, of the dispensation of the gospel, the apostle would very carefully and distinctly point out the essential, and very prominent, part of it, which is formed, by *sanctification*. But, besides this, he had specific reasons for doing so. The Gentile members of this, as well as of all other churches, recently converted, as they were, had still to be freed from many deeply-rooted, and hurtful, prejudices, and more effectually to lay aside their former inveterate evil habits. They were constantly exposed, not only to the dangerous example and seductions of a grossly sinful and wicked world, but even to the importunities, the ridicule, and the persecutions, of their unbelieving friends and relatives. As we learn, in a former part of this epistle, the enemies of the apostle misrepresented his doctrines, as having an immoral tendency. These reasons, then, rendered it imperative on him, to inculcate on the Gentile converts, whom he here

addresses, the necessity of a good, pure, and pious, life, the attainment of final salvation and eternal life.

But, the immediate occasion of the passage, which follows, was the words, which the apostle had just written. "The law entered, that sin might abound. But, where sin abounded grace did much more abound." A mere glance at these words might give occasion to the question, which he next puts in the mouth of the unbelieving Gentiles. "What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" For do not your words imply that we may? In another part of the epistle, the Apostle fully explains the purpose, for which the law entered, and clearly shows how far that purpose is from giving any countenance to any manner of sin. Waving, therefore, for the present, any further observations on that point, he merely, in a brief but emphatic manner, answers the question of the Gentile convert, in the negative. "God forbid!"

The apostle proceeds to declare and to illustrate the principles of the Christian, relative to sanctification, and earnestly to enforce the practical effects of those principles. As completely as the dead have ceased from the active ways of the living, so completely he affirms does the Christian, by his principles and profession, cease, from sinning. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?"

Here the apostle makes use of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as an illustration

of his subject ; and the illustration is very felicitous and highly instructive ; because those glorious events, on which all the hopes and prospects of the Christian wholly depend, ought ever to be present in his mind ; and because they are highly calculated to represent the present state of the Christian, in reference to sanctification. It must, however, be remembered, that in the following passage, the use, which the apostle makes of the death and resurrection of our Lord is merely metaphorical. He is there neither proving the reality of those facts, nor pointing out their consequences ; but, assuming the truth and importance of these, he merely illustrates, by them, the present moral state of the Christian. If this be not duly attended to, we must suppose, that he blends the literal with the metaphorical sense ; and, thus, we shall fail to perceive the full force and beauty of the passage.

In order to perceive the full force of this passage, we must carefully remember, that, in speaking of righteousness and sin, the language of the apostle is highly figurative. In speaking of these he uses, what grammarians call a *prosopopœia* ;—he speaks of them as persons,—as masters, to whom men stand in the relation of bondmen. This manner of speech is always lively and forcible, and, in the apostolic age, when the state of human bondage was very prevalent, and when also it was very customary, not only to personify, but even to deify, the virtues and vices,

it was peculiarly appropriate and forcible. Here, too, we must carefully, observe, that, in this, as in many other passages, the apostle speaks of the Christian church, or community, not as, in its faith and practice, it actually is, but as it is, by its profession, privileges, and obligations. Nor are we to forget, that the apostle, as usual, kindly ranks himself among the Gentile Christians.

Having made these necessary preliminary observations, let us now hear the apostle.—First, then, we find, that he simply states the fact, that there *is* a death, to which their profession and principles have subjected all Christians, and also a resurrection, to which, in the same manner, they have all come;—that is, that in a figurative sense, they have been subjected to the death of Christ, and that, in a similar sense, they have come to his resurrection.

“Know ye not, that as many of us as have been baptized unto Christ,”—that all, who profess to be the disciples of Christ,—“have been baptized unto his death? Therefore, by baptism,”—the seal of our privileges and obligations, and the symbol of our profession,—“we have been buried with him unto death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory,” or power, “of the Father, even so we also should walk in a new life. For, since we have been partakers of the likeness, or nature, of his death, we shall also be of that of his resurrection.”

Having, thus, affirmed, that there is a death and

a resurrection to which we have come, he proceeds to show the nature of that death and resurrection. “Knowing, that our old man,”—the old Gentile, sinful, character,—“was crucified with him, that the body of sin,”—that the sinful person,—“might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not be in bondage to Sin. For he who,”—in this sense,—“has died, has been freed from Sin,”—saved from the destructive wages of Sin. “Since, then, we have died with Christ, we believe, that we shall also live with him.” We believe, that we shall ever and irreversibly live with him. “Knowing, that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For, in that he died, he died unto sin,” or for sin, “once; but, in that he liveth he liveth unto God,”—holily, gloriously, and eternally. “*Thus*, also, reckon ye yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Thus, has the apostle illustrated how utterly foreign to the principles, obligations, and profession, of the Christian, sin is, and how congenial to these is a perfect and uninterrupted course of righteousness, by a reference to the death and resurrection of our Lord; and every sincere Christian will not only be sensible, that the reference is a just and happy illustration, but will also feel it to be a very strong motive to deter him from sin, and constrain him to lead a good life. The apostle, then, proceeds to

illustrate the same thing, by reference to the custom of bondage and manumission prevalent in his time, and familiar to those to whom he writes ; while he warns them against a relapse into their former sinful life, and exhorts and encourages them to a perfect conformity to the will of God, and, for this purpose, exhibits the powerful motives of the awful punishment, which awaits sinners, and the great and glorious reward, which is in reserve for the righteous. “ Let not sin, therefore, reign in,” or over, “ your mortal body, that ye should obey it in,” or by, “ the lusts thereof.”

Here the apostle points out to his Christian brethren the great and special encouragement, which they had, wholly to renounce sin, and to devote themselves to righteousness, in their immunity from the ministration of death,—the Mosaic law,—and in their enjoyment of the ministration of life,—the gracious dispensation of the gospel. “ For sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” You are not placed under that law, which said, “ Do this, and live ;” and, “ Cursed is every one, that continueth not in *all things*, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” You are not under the mortal dominion of that master, the least breach of whose laws inevitably subjects those, who bear his yoke, to death, but under the mild and merciful dispensation of grace, which renders your sincere and persevering

endeavours to obey acceptable;—under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has procured for you free justification of life, and who, notwithstanding involuntary lapses, and manifold infirmities and imperfections, will, for your future patient continuance in well-doing, finally award to you the crown of eternal life.

The question, which the apostle now puts in the mouth of the Roman converts, and the answer and explanation, to which it gives rise, are of infinite importance. “What, then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?” Is it not implied, that we may? “God forbid!” Although we are delivered from the law of sin and death, which forgives not the least breach of any of its requirements, and though we are placed under a dispensation of grace, by which we have obtained a right to a glorious life and immortality, still “we are not without law, but under law to Christ.” We are still under the strongest obligations to yield obedience to the divine will and precepts; and we are expressly and solemnly assured, that, “if we live after the flesh we shall die.” This is uniformly the doctrine of the apostle in all his recorded discourses, and in all his own writings; and here he clearly teaches it, by an apt and familiar illustration. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves bondmen to obey, his bondmen ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of Sin, unto death, or of Obedience, unto righteousness,” and its consequent salvation?



Here the apostle most thankfully allows, that the Roman converts had practically shown, that they well understood his doctrine. “But God be thanked, that although ye were the bondmen of sin, ye have obeyed, from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you ;”—you readily took the impression of the type of doctrine, with which ye were stamped. Those converts had, not only heartily believed in the forgiveness of their past sins, through the redemption, that is in Christ, but also in the necessity of earnestly and diligently working out their salvation, by a future good life ; and we learn, that their principles were reduced to practice.


But, although the faith and practice of the Roman converts, thus, merited the commendation of the apostle, he deemed it not unnecessary here to warn and guard them all against any misapprehension, and consequent abuse, of the dispensation of grace, which they enjoyed ; and, no doubt, there were, among them, individuals, who greatly required to be reminded of the strong obligations, by which their principles and profession bound them to renounce all manner of sin, and to lead an uniformly good and holy life. “Being made free from sin, ye became the bondmen of righteousness.”

Here the apostle interrupts his discourse, to inform those Gentile believers, why he made use of the illustration, which he here adopts. “I speak after the manner of men ; because of the infirmity of your

flesh ;”—I now take my illustration from human customs, with which you are familiar ; because, being so recently converted, and consequently imperfect in your apprehension of spiritual things, and being still in danger of yielding to the strong temptations, with which you are constantly, on every hand, beset, and of relapsing into your former sinful habits, such an illustration is both necessary and suitable.

Having, thus, given the reason of his illustration, and apologized for the use of it, he proceeds, in the same metaphorical strain, with the contrast between their present state, principles, and profession, and their Gentile condition, and authoritatively and solemnly to declare the respective unspeakably important consequences of those conditions. “ For, as ye yielded your members,”—your mental faculties, as well as your bodily members and organs,—“ in bondage to Uncleaness and to Iniquity, unto iniquity,”—that is, to work iniquity,—“ even so now yield,”—or, you have now yielded,—“ your members, in bondage, to righteousness, unto holiness,”—that is, to labour in holiness.

Here, the apostle emphatically affirms, that, in representing those believers as, in their former state, bondmen to sin, and yielding their members servile instruments of impurity and iniquity, he neither misrepresents, nor exaggerates things. “ For, when ye were the bondmen of sin, ye were freed-men from




righteousness ;”—devoting yourselves to sin, you had wholly renounced the service of righteousness.

Pertinent and forcible is the question, which the apostle here abruptly puts; and unspeakably instructive and important is the answer, which, sparing as it were, the feelings of those Gentile converts, he makes to his own question. “What fruit had ye *then* from those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?” What provision were you, by the practice of those things, making for your future good and happiness? None. On the contrary, “the end,” or reward, “of those things is death ;”—that is, to those, who continue in the practice of them. But greatly, joyfully, and gloriously, different does he represent the consequences to be of their newly acquired Christian privileges, and of their changed hearts and lives. “But now being set free from sin, and become bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

In the same metaphorical language, the apostle concludes his illustration, with the most solemnly instructive, and unspeakably important, declaration, that “the wages of sin,”—that is, the wages given by sin,—“is death ; but,” that “the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This invaluable passage of Scripture, then, at first, and more immediately addressed to the primitive Gentile Christians, in Rome, has remained, and

will ever remain, to all the Gentile christianized world, a most eloquent and powerful exhortation to sanctification. The prejudices of education, a blind attachment to the tenets of sect, and to human systems of theology, a veneration of human authorities, and famed names, and the thralldom of the passions and appetites, may bring, and indeed often do bring, men to believe, that a continuance in the practice of those sins, which may have obtained dominion over them, is consistent with the final attainment of eternal life, and even that, thus, the grace of God will be rendered more illustrious. But assuredly there can be nothing more delusive, and nothing more contrary to this, and to all other parts of the oracles of God, than this belief. What can be more unlike life than death? Clearly nothing. But this is the entire dissimilarity, which, as we have seen, the inspired apostle declares to subsist between a life of sin and that, which, when duly actuated by his principles, the Christian leads. Both the newly converted Gentile Christian, and he, who has been born a Gentile Christian, though, in their past life, they may have been the chief of sinners, will, on becoming penitent and reformed, assuredly find, that however much sin may have abounded, grace will much more abound. When, on his return, and while yet at a distance, his Father will run to the sinner, embrace him, and confer on him every mark of paternal love and honour. But, on the heart and mind



of every one, who bears the name of Christian, let the awful truth, here declared by the inspired apostle, be deeply and indelibly engraven, that the wages, which he, who continues the slave of sin, shall finally receive, will be death !

Misery and disgrace are the wages, which countless numbers of the slaves of sin, within the pale of the Christian church, have, in all ages, received, in this world ! How many, indeed, have the victims been, whom the cruel bondage of sin brought not only to misery and shame, but to an untimely grave ! How many a child, dear to his doting parents, as their own souls, has, by vicious and profligate courses, instead of fulfilling their fond expectations, brought both himself and them to sorrow, shame and suffering ! How many have been the parents, who, by wicked and profligate lives, have not only brought ruin and disgrace on themselves, but likewise entailed shame and suffering on their guiltless progeny ! What countless numbers have there been, who, by the gratification of their sinful lusts, reaped from it, not true enjoyment, but grief and ruin ! What countless numbers have there been, who, by unrighteous deeds, have attained, not the good and happiness blindly expected, but grief, misery, and infamy ! What countless numbers have there been, who, even after the unrighteous attainment of wealth and distinction, have, in the midst of outward splendour and worldly prosperity, experienced

the painful and perpetual scourge of an accusing conscience! What countless numbers have there been, who, by vice and crime, have either suffered an early and ignominious death, or dragged out a life of wretchedness and infamy, less tolerable than death itself!

Such are the bitter and baneful fruits, which the slaves of Sin reap,—such are the woful wages, which they receive,—in this world. What, then, have they to expect,—what are the wages, which they shall receive,—in the state to come? The Spirit of God expressly informs us. They are *death*! From the doom, indeed, which the transgression of our original common father has brought on all mankind, they too shall, in consequence of the ransom paid by Christ, be delivered. They, who, in this state have done evil, as well as they, who have done good, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall arise from the dust. But for what purpose do the slaves of sin come again to life? It is for the unutterably awful purpose of condemnation and signal punishment, never to be reversed! They shall, we are assured, be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power!

How powerfully, then, ought these solemn and unspeakably momentous considerations to urge us utterly, and for ever, to reject from our mortal bodies the tyrannical yoke of sin! How effectually ought

they to deter us from yielding our members instruments of unrighteousness to sin !

But, we not only have these motives to deter us from submitting ourselves to the yoke of sin ; we have also the greatest encouragement, and the strongest motives, that can be conceived, to constrain us to yield ourselves servants unto God, and our members instruments of righteousness to Him. We are not under the law, but under grace. We are not, like the ancient people of God, required to establish a right to life and immortality, by an absolutely sinless obedience to an exceedingly comprehensive and uncompromising law. What, from our weakness, neither this, nor any such law, could ever have enabled us to do, a God of love has done for us. A God of love has placed us under a dispensation, by which eternal life is bestowed on us, as a *gift* ; and, that we may not forfeit this gift, of which we are heirs,—that we may finally secure it,—we are required to be bondmen to God and to have our fruit unto holiness.

God our heavenly Father, then bestows on us, as a gift, eternal life ! He bestows on us, a gift, which, when possessed and enjoyed during the longest period of time, of which we can form any conception, is still but new ! It is eternal ! But this gift will be, not merely life,—not merely a restoration to being, vitality, consciousness, and sensation. It will be a life of glory, honour, and peace,—glory, honour, and peace, worthy of the great and glorious giver,—

worthy of that omnipotent Being, who called the universe into existence, and by whose gracious, and unsearchably wise Providence, it is sustained and governed ! Who, then, that has any title to the name of a rational being,—who, that is not utterly blinded and infatuated,—would not yield himself to God, and his members instruments of righteousness to him, finally to secure the ineffably valuable and glorious gift of eternal life ?

When, at any time, our thoughts are occupied in the contemplation of that eternal life, of which we have become heirs, we must remember, that this gift, as the apostle here reminds us, is “ through Jesus Christ our Lord.” In relation to us, indeed, it is truly the *gift* of God ; but the Son of God, our gracious Saviour, gave himself a ransom for us. A most encouraging consideration ! For, it enables us to reason, thus :—“ He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?”



## LECTURE VIII.

## ROMANS VII. &amp; VIII. 1—4.

HAVING, in the portion of the epistle immediately preceding, urged on the believing Gentiles the necessity of sanctification, the apostle now proceeds to address the Jewish converts, and teaches them, that they too must bring forth fruit unto God, live after the spirit, be spiritually minded, cherish the spirit of Christ, wholly renounce sin, earnestly lead a life of righteousness, and patiently endure the trials of this state of probation. In doing this, the apostle, also, reminds the Jewish Christian brethren, that the Mosaic law,—the ministration of death,—was wholly abrogated, and very fully and forcibly demonstrates, that, through human frailty and sinfulness, that law was utterly inefficient to enable those, who were placed under it, to establish a right to eternal life.

As in the preceding, so also in the following, passage the language of the apostle, the reader must be aware, is highly metaphorical. The Mosaic law, the church, and sin, are personified. The law is represented as a husband, to whom the Church, under the

divine sanction, was solemnly espoused, all the days of the life of that husband. On the resurrection of Christ the husband died, and the matrimonial connexion was, accordingly, dissolved; and, under the same sanction, a new and inseparable connexion was formed by the Church with another husband,—Christ. Sin is represented as a living, subtle, and destructive, agent.

“ Know ye not, brethren,—for I speak to them, that know the law,”—I speak to the Jewish Christians,—“ how that the law,”—the Mosaic law,—“ hath dominion over a man, as long as it liveth?” These words are elliptical; and the ellipsis may be supplied, and the affirmation of the Apostle connected with what follows, thus; “ The law hath dominion over a man, as long as it liveth,” or is in force; but no longer; and its authority over those, who are placed under it, may aptly be illustrated, by the union, which subsists between husband and wife. This connexion is sacred and inviolable; yet the death of either party dissolves it; and the surviving party may lawfully be married to another. “ For, the woman, who has an husband, is bound, by the law, to her husband; but, if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So, then, if, while the husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But, if her husband be dead, she is free from that law;

so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another. Thus, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law,"—or, the law has died to you,—“that ye should be married to another, even to him, who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit to God.”

But, was it not marvellous and paradoxical, that the Church should produce fruit to God, by a total and final separation from the law ;—from that husband, to whom God himself had so solemnly united her ? On a superficial view, indeed, it had that appearance ; but a closer inspection, and a due attention to the divine dispensations and purposes, soon and clearly prove, not only, that the separation is not inconsistent with sanctification, but, on the contrary, that it is exceedingly calculated to promote it ;—nay, that, by the union of the Church with the Law, Sin had acquired an irresistible and destructive power and prevalence, which previously it had not. This is what the apostle next proceeds to show. “For, when we were in the flesh,”—when we were under the Law,—“the motions of sin, which were by the Law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.” He, then, shows how greatly and how happily different the consequences are of the union, which the Church has formed with Christ. “But, now, we are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held ; so that we serve in newness

of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the Letter ;’—so that we serve our new Lord Jesus Christ,—“for the Lord is the Spirit,”\*—and not our old master, the Law,—denominated also the “letter.”


Here follows a digression, in which the apostle fully and forcibly proves, not only the utter inefficiency of the law, as the means of justification, and of eternal life, on account of human frailty and sinfulness, but even, that, from the same cause, it became the occasion of the assumption, by Sin, of a character exceedingly more heinous, and of irresistible, mortal, strength. He had just affirmed, it was, by the Law, that the motions of Sin wrought in the members of those, who were subjected to it, to bring forth fruit unto death ; and, then, he very appropriately puts in the mouth of the Jewish, judaizing, Christians, who, some, from involuntary weakness of faith, and more, from wilful pertinacity, in their prejudices, would not allow, that the law of Moses was abrogated, as the means of attaining justification of life, this question ;—“What, then, do we say? Is the law sin?” For, do not your words imply, that it is a sinful dispensation? The apostle solemnly denies the implication, and proceeds clearly and cogently to prove, that, far from being of a sinful nature, it was by it, that sin was pointed out, and exposed, that, accordingly, the law was holy, just, and good, and, that it was not the cause, but merely

\* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

the unavoidable occasion, of sin. "God forbid," that we should say, the law is sin. "Nay, I had not known sin,"—I had not known sin, in the full extent of its sinfulness, and in its mortal nature,—“but by the law,”—but by that law, which detects it, in all its heinousness, and to the transgression of which is annexed the penalty of death. "For, I had not known lust," or covetousness,—I had not known the heinous and destructive nature of this sin,—“except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet ;” and he, who covets, shall die. "But sin assuming strength, by the law, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence," or covetousness ; "For, without law,"—without a law condemning the transgressor to death,—“sin is dead ;”—it has no mortal power. "For, where there is no law,"—no law, having annexed to the transgression of it the penalty of death,—“there is no sin,”—no mortal sin. "For, I,—that is, any descendant of Abraham,—“was formerly alive ;”—I lived, until the law, which had annexed to the least breach of it the penalty of death, was given at Mount Sinai ;—“but when the commandment came, sin revived,”—I was unable to obey,—“and I died ;”—I became obnoxious to death. "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For, sin, acquiring strength, by the commandment, deceived me,”—as the serpent deceived Eve, —“and by it slew me. Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”

But, the Jewish, judaizing, Christian here starts another objection. The apostle had said, that they, who were subjected to the Mosaic law, “found the commandment to be unto death.” Hence this objection ;—“Has, then, that, which is good, become death to me?” For, do not you virtually say so? “By no means. But, sin”—hath become death to me,—“that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good ; that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful,”—that, by the extent and spirituality of the commandment, and by the destructive consequences of the breach of it, sin might be clearly shown to be, what it really is, most sinful.

Here the apostle proceeds still further to show the excellency and spirituality of the law, but, at the same time, its inefficiency, for the purposes of sanctification, by a vivid and affecting description of the workings of the heart and mind of a man, who is placed under it. “For we know, that the law is spiritual ; but I,”—the Jew under the law,—“am carnal, sold under sin,”—enslaved by my sinful passions and appetites. “For, that, which I do I approve not ; for what I would,”—what my reason, instructed and directed, by the law, dictates,—“that do I not ; but what I hate,”—what my reason, enlightened by the law, condemns,—“that I do. If, then, I do that, which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good. Now, then, it is no more I,”—it is not I, in



the rational, and nobler, sense,—“that do it, but sin, that dwelleth in me”—my sinful appetites and passions, which have obtained dominion over me. “For I know, that good dwelleth not in me, that is, in my flesh,”—in my animal, sensual, nature. “For, to will is present with me,”—my reason readily perceives and recommends, what is good;—“but how to perform that, which is good I find not;”—to do, what is good I am unable. “For, the good, that I would,”—the good, which my reason, instructed and guided, by the law, dictates,—“I do not; but the evil, which I would not”—which my reason condemns,—“that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I,”—the rational man,—the man, in the better sense,—“that do it, but sin, that dwelleth in me,”—my sinful appetites and passions, which have vanquished my reason and enslaved me. “I find then a law,”—I perceive in myself a principle,—“that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For, I delight in the law of God, after the inward man,”—my reason wholly approves the law of God, and dictates perfect and cheerful obedience to it. “But, I see another law,”—another principle,—“in my members,”—in my animal nature,—“warring against the law of my mind,”—contending against my reason,—“and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members,”—overcoming me, and enslaving me, to the sinful appetites and passions of my animal nature.

Such was the struggle between the reason and the animal principle of a Jew, while under the law, and such was the inefficiency of the law, as the means of sanctification, and of attaining life. Finding himself, then, enslaved by sin, and seeing before him inevitable death, in the anguish of his spirit, and, in the depth of despair, he exclaims ;—" O wretched man, that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death !" Who, or what, shall save me from this enslaved mortal body ? To these impassioned words, and before the Jew had quite finished his discourse, the apostle makes this joyful answer ;—" The grace \* of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." But the Jew continues and ends his discourse, with this general conclusion ;—" So, then, I myself,"—I the same person,—“ with the mind,” or reason,—“ serve the law of God ; but, with the flesh,”—with the appetites and passions,—“ the law of sin.”

The epistle of this Apostle to the Galatian churches, in which there were some, who inculcated the necessity of yielding an unreserved obedience to the Mosaic law, still further illustrates, what he here writes concerning the abrogation of that law, and of the establishment of the covenant of grace. “ Wherefore, then, serveth the law ?” For what purpose was it added ? “ It was added because of transgressions,”—to show the exceedingly sinful, and inevitably destructive, nature of sin,—“ till the seed,”—Christ,—“ should

\* Thus, many good critics read these words.



come, to whom the promise was made.”—“ If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But, the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise, by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them, that believe. But, before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But, after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For, ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. For, as many of you, as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”\*

But, the attentive reader will bear in mind, that the digression of the apostle, in the portion of the epistle immediately under our consideration, relative to the intrinsic excellency, but eventual inefficiency, of the law is *but* a digression, and that what immediately follows is an inference, not from the digression, but from the words, which precede it. Thus ; “ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him, who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For, when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. But, now, we are

\* Gal. iii., 19 and 21-27.

delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”—“ There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them, which are in Christ,”—to them, who are the professed disciples and subjects of Christ,—“ and who walk, not after the flesh,”—who lead not a sinful life,—“ but after the spirit,”—according to the dictates of reason enlightened by revelation. “ For, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,”—that is, the dispensation of the gospel,—“ hath made me,”—the Jewish, and consequently the Gentile, Christian, —“ free from the law of sin and death ;”—from that law, which, though, in itself, holy, just, and good, eventually gave life, and a power, inevitably mortal, to sin. “ For, what the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,”—a sacrifice for sin,—“ condemned sin in the flesh,”—destroyed the mortal power of sin, by his obedience to the death of the cross,—“ that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit ;”—that we, who lead a good and pious life, might attain that justification and eternal life, to attain which the law was ordained, but which, from our frailty and sinfulness, it was unable to effect.

Inexpressibly precious, then, was the deliverance effected for those Jews, who believed in the Son of

God, in being freed from the law of sin and death, and in being placed under “the law of the spirit of life,” and wonderful the blindness and infatuation of the great body of that highly favoured nation, who, from the first refused, and who still continue to refuse, to submit to that inestimable, and long promised, covenant, by which the former sins of those, who do submit to it, and observe its conditions, are remembered no more;—to that covenant, by which God has become *their* God, and they *his* people;—to a dispensation, which was introduced so manifestly, and so marvellously, by the power of God! Oh! may that joyful day hasten, when, as divinely predicted, that thick vail, which has so long, and so deplorably, covered the minds of the ancient people of God, shall be removed, when they shall believe, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and when they shall experience, that the gifts and calling of God are irreversible.

How unspeakably great is the debt of gratitude and praise, which we, my Gentile fellow-christians, owe to God, who has brought us, whose fathers were without hope, and without God, in the world, into a spiritual covenant relation to himself! It had been a precious privilege and great blessing, to have been received among his people, even when they were under the severe discipline of the Mosaic law. For, even then, they possessed the divine oracles, and the promises and types of good and great things to come;

and they, who made a suitable use of them, we have reason to believe, shall, through him, by whom grace and truth came, be, in the end, savingly benefited, by them. But, eternally adored be God! he has, not only brought us into a spiritual relation to himself, but into a spiritual relation, under a covenant, whose privileges are so great and precious, and whose benefits are so inestimable, and so glorious! Many prophets, righteous men, and kings, even under the ancient covenant, ardently desired to hear, and to see, the spiritual things, which we now hear and see; but to them the wisdom of God judged it fit, to deny that privilege and blessing.


Let us, my Christian brethren, particularly bear in mind, the strong obligations, under which we lie, to "bring forth fruit unto God," and to "live after the spirit." Let us, as the people of God, bear in mind, that our freedom from the ministration of death is a motive, which urges us, to observe the divine commandments more earnestly and carefully than did even the awful sanctions of that ministration. God, our heavenly Father, sent his Son into the world, that, having assumed our nature, he might, on the ignominious cross, die, as a sacrifice, for our sins, that there might be no condemnation for us, that the mortal power of sin might be destroyed, that we might receive justification of life, and that we might be put in a state, in which we should have the most ample and effectual means of working out

an eternal and ineffably glorious salvation. These things are conferred upon us not for our own righteousness, but freely by the grace of God ; and my Christian brethren, if they are, do they not form the strongest possible motive to constrain us, to “ bring forth fruit to God,” and to live after the dictates of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in the divine oracles ?

Let every one, who bears the name of Christian ever practically remember the fearful and inevitable consequences of “ living, not after the spirit, but after the flesh.” These consequences will necessarily come under our consideration, in discoursing on the words of the apostle, which immediately follow. Yet here let it be generally observed, that the neglect of so great, so free, and so glorious a salvation, as that, which the law of the spirit of life has placed within our reach, will assuredly and justly be followed by a correspondingly great and signal punishment. Surely it is a sin peculiarly great, and worthy of condemnation, to hate the marvellous light of the gospel, and to abuse it ! Surely the Son of God cannot be trampled under foot with impunity ! Surely the blood of the covenant, by which we have been consecrated, to be the people of God, cannot be despised, without the Divine displeasure ! Surely the gracious Spirit of God, by whose ministry we are brought to the enjoyment of our great and precious Christian privileges and prospects cannot be contemned, without drawing down on all, who do condemn them, the

most severe and signal effect of the Divine justice !— In this our state of probation, indeed, the most eminent Christian must be encompassed with many sinful infirmities and imperfections ; and there is none, who, from either the force of temptation, or the deceitfulness of sin, may not occasionally and most lamentably transgress,—nay, long proceed in a course of transgression ; and, when contrition, and a steady and permanent reformation, come, the blood of Christ, “ who is the propitiation for our sins,” will cleanse them from all unrighteousness, and render them spotless before God. But, under any dispensation, however lenient and merciful, the wages of a continued course of sin must be death. Even under the ministration of grace, the justice of God makes it necessary, that the persevering impenitent transgressor “ should be punished, with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

We have, in this discourse, considered the contest, which was carried on between the reason and the appetites and passions of one, who was placed under the law of Moses, and we have also considered the happy deliverance obtained by him, in coming to the enjoyment of the dispensation of grace. Now, is there not, it may be asked, still a struggle between these principles, under the dispensation of the gospel ? Undoubtedly there is. This same apostle, in writing to the Galatian churches, affirms, that there is such



a struggle. “I say, then, walk in the spirit,”—obey the dictates of your divinely instructed reason,—“and by no means fulfil the lust of the flesh;”—carefully guard against any sinful gratification of your appetites and passions. “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary, the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the spirit, ye are not under the law.”\* With this Apostle the Apostle Peter clearly agrees; for he, too, addresses this earnest and affectionate exhortation to all Christians;—“Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.†” But, although every Christian must experience such a contest between the two opposite principles of his nature, how incomparably greater are the advantages, under which he maintains the struggle, than those which the Jew, who was placed under the law, possessed. The Jew carried on the contest under a law, which visited the least transgression of its greatly multiplied and varied requirements with death; and the result was accordingly fatal. But, the Christian receives, as a gift, that justification and life, which the Jew, under the law, was required to win, by his own weak and unavailing efforts. The one, through human frailty, was slain, by the very weapon which was given to him, to conquer; the other is clad in a celestial

\* Gal. v. 16.

† 1 Pet. ii. 11.

panoply, which, if he do not willingly submit to the enemy and to death, ensures to him a glorious and eternal victory.\*

\* Of the struggle, for the mastery, between the mental and the animal man, the reflecting men among the Gentiles themselves, unaided by revelation, have always been sensible; and they have well described it.

“ My reason this, my passion that, persuades.  
I see the right, and I approve it too,  
Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

*Ovid. Metam. vii. 17.*

“ More in my mind than body lie my pains ;—  
Whate’er may hurt me, I with joy pursue ;  
Whate’er may do me good, with horror view.”

*Hor. Epist. i. 8, 3, &c.*

“ For, since the transgressor would not transgress, but do what is right, it is evident, that, what he wills, he does not, and that, what he wills not, he does.”—*Arrian, Epict. ii. 26.*



## LECTURE IX.

PART I.  

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## ROMANS, VIII. 5—17.

IN a preceding part of the epistle, the apostle inculcates on all Gentile Christians the necessity of sanctification. In the portion, which we are now to consider, he addresses himself chiefly, but not exclusively, to the Jewish converts, for the same purpose. He had been falsely accused of recommending the practice of evil, that good might come of it. He knew, that the sensual and the ignorant would turn the grace of God into an occasion of the commission of the most enormous sins, and say, that we may continue in sin, that grace may abound. From another apostle, too, we find, that the unlearned and unstable had misrepresented and perverted the doctrines of Scripture, and especially those of this apostle, to their own destruction. From motives, then, the most powerful, that can be addressed to the mind of man, he inculcates on his Jewish, Christian brethren, and, with them, on all other Christians, the necessity of a holy,

good, and pious, life, in order to the attainment of final salvation and eternal life.

In the context the apostle declares, that “there is now no condemnation to them, who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” and whoever possesses a competent knowledge of the expressive and copious language, in which the apostle writes, will, on perusing his own words, quickly and clearly perceive, that the words, “who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” may be rendered, *if* they walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and, therefore, that they express a condition of deliverance from condemnation, or punishment.

But, that “living, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” is made a condition of our deliverance from condemnation, and of our attainment of eternal life is made known to us, not merely by either implication, or inference, but by direct, plain, full, and most impressive doctrine. “For,”—continues the apostle,—“the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For, what the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin, in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “In us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,”—I say;—for to walk, thus, is an express condition of final justification, and

of the attainment of eternal life. "For, they, that are after the flesh,"—they, who lead a sensual, wicked, life,—“do mind the things of the flesh,”—do set their hearts on the things of this world, and are bent merely on the gratification of their lusts and passions ; —“but they, that are after the Spirit,”—they, who, in accordance with the dictates of reason, enlightened and influenced by the Holy Spirit, lead a pious, pure, and good, life,—“the things of the Spirit,”—the things, which are revealed and enjoined, by the gospel. Now, these two different modes of life produce the most opposite effects. The result of the one is unspeakably disastrous and deplorable ; and the fruit of the other is ineffably precious and happy. “For to be carnally minded is, death ; but, to be spiritually minded is, life and peace.”

Here, the Apostle shows, how it is, that they, who live after the flesh, must incur the signal punishment, now mentioned. “The carnal mind is enmity against God ;” and this enmity is caused, by that disobedience to the will and commandments of God, which is required in the new, as well as in the old, covenant.” “For, the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God ; neither indeed can be ;” and he, who is a transgressor of the divine precepts, must, from a moral necessity, hate their good and glorious author. “So, then, they, who are in the flesh,”—or, “who live after the flesh,”—“cannot please God,” but, on the contrary, greatly displease him, and, unless it be pre-

vented, by penitence and reformation, inevitably incur the appointed, condign, punishment,—death !

These awful considerations were greatly calculated to fill the minds of the Roman Christians with much concern. It was, therefore, necessary to encourage them ; and this the apostle could justly do. For, in the sequel, we find him declaring his conviction, that they were, “ full of goodness,” and, “ filled with all knowledge ;” \* and here he says, “ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, *if*,”—or, as those, who are most accurately acquainted with the original, explain the word—“ SINCE the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

Fully and perfectly to understand this passage, it is necessary to attend to the following general considerations. The apostles and other evangelists, as well as the ancient prophets, received the doctrines of the gospel, by immediate revelation and inspiration, from God. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, accordingly, having been written by those inspired men, contain the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and are the divinely appointed, fit, and powerful, instrument, or means, by which the Spirit of God operates on the human heart and mind. When, therefore, those doctrines were originally and orally addressed to men, the Holy Spirit was at work, on their hearts and minds ; and likewise, when the dictates of the Holy Spirit, contained in the divine oracles, are now, either read, or heard, by men, it is

\* Romans, xv. 14.



evident, that the Holy Spirit operates on them. But, a man, whether the doctrines of the gospel be, for the first time, addressed to him, or whether, being a professed Christian, he may have long read, or heard them, being a rational, moral, and accountable, creature, placed here, in a state of probation, is left at liberty, either to receive and cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit, and savingly to benefit, by those influences, or to resist, abuse, and banish them. When he does receive and cherish them, and is actuated by them, they fail not to produce in him those heavenly principles and dispositions, which are essential to the character of the true Christian, and which were so gloriously exemplified in our divine Lord. But, when he does not receive and cherish them, those principles and dispositions are wanting ; and in their place, there is what is greatly the reverse. Hence, in this passage, having “the Spirit of God dwelling in us,”—being “led by the Spirit of God,”—“having the Spirit of Christ,”—and “Christ being in us,”—are convertible phrases, and, in sense, the same, and, the cause being put for the effect, signify our possessing those principles and dispositions.

Due attention, then, to these things enables us usefully to understand the words of the apostle, in this passage, relative to the Holy Spirit. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit ; since the spirit of God dwells in you ;”—since, by producing, in you, the proper fruits, it is manifest, that you are actuated,

by the dictates and influences of the Spirit of God. This declaration was exceedingly encouraging to the church of Christ, in Rome. But, this church had now become numerous ; and, from the words of the apostle, which here follow, we may justly infer, and, indeed, we are, in the sequel, plainly informed, that some of its members required to be addressed differently. Those members, accordingly, he must have had in his eye, when he added, “ But, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ; ”— if any man do not, by the proper effects, show, that he is actuated, by the dictates and influences of the Spirit of Christ, or of God, that man does not effectually and savingly belong to Christ.

It was to those, as it is to all, Christians, of infinite importance, that they should be able clearly and thoroughly to know, when the Spirit of God did dwell in them, and when they had not that Spirit. The apostle, accordingly, furnishes them with an infallible criterion, to enable them to ascertain their true state. “ If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of,”—or in respect to,—“ sin ; but the spirit is life, because of,”—or in regard to,—“ righteousness.” That is, if the Spirit of God, or of Christ, dwell, or if the character of Christ be found, in you, you mortify sin in your members, you have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, you use every means and every endeavour to abstain from all manner of sin, and, renouncing all ungodliness and

worldly lusts, you maintain a good, holy, and pious, life, you produce those genuine fruits of the Spirit,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. If these heavenly principles and dispositions actuate you, and if these virtues show themselves, in your conduct, your spirit, or inward man, has acquired life and strength ; and the issue will be eternal life. “ For,” continues the apostle, “ if the spirit of him, who raised up Christ, from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ, from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit,” or on account of his Spirit,—“ that dwelleth in you.”

Lest any one should, for a moment, inconsiderately suppose, that, from these words, it may be inferred, that the pious and good only are to be raised from the dead, let it be remembered that the object, which the apostle has here in view, is *their* edification and encouragement. That there will be a resurrection of the wicked also can admit of, neither question, nor doubt. For, our divine Lord himself, as well as this and all the other inspired writers of the gospel, declares to us, as clearly as words can convey any information, that there will be a resurrection of the unjust, as well as of the just ; but, alas ! for a purpose very different.

Here, the apostle, in an inference, deduced from the doctrines and arguments, contained in the context, addresses to all the members of this church,

whether Jewish, or Gentile, converts, and, with them, to all Christians, of every age, a most solemn and impressive exhortation; enforcing attention to it, by the strongest motives, that can be applied to the human heart and mind. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh;” but,—as the critics, supplying the ellipsis, add,—to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit. “For, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;”—you shall, after your resurrection, in the day of final account, be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. “But, if ye, through the Spirit,”—if, obeying the dictates, and cherishing the influences, of the Spirit,—“ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;”—you shall, after the resurrection, enjoy eternal life, honour, and peace.

In the remaining part of the passage, now under our consideration, the apostle, in language, which, for eloquence and power, never was surpassed, continues his description of the present inestimable privileges, and of the future glorious prospects, of the Christian, and of the dispositions of mind and heart, by which he ought ever to be actuated. “For, as many as are led,” or actuated, “by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.” In terms of the covenant of grace, they are, in the present state, the children of God; but, in the highest sense, they are, as our Lord observes, the children of God, because they




are the children, or destined subjects, of a glorious resurrection and eternal life.

On what the apostle next affirms every truly Christian mind must ever dwell, with the greatest delight; and happy were it for that large portion of the Christian community, which consists of those, who are constitutionally desponding, of those, who labour under errors, arising, either from early and deep-rooted prejudices, or from a blind attachment to human systems of theology, and of those, who give the preference to present, sinful, evanescent, gratifications, over the solid and lasting, tranquillity and joy, which arise from a well-founded sense of being an object of the love of our heavenly Father, did they practically feel the force of the affirmation. “For, ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;”—ye have not again, as under the law, received the spirit, by which, through the fear of death, ye were all your lifetime subject to bondage;—“but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!”—in full confidence, that we are the children of a glorious resurrection. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with,” or to, “our spirit, that we are the children of God.” The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal of the present adoption of those early Christians, as the children of God, and an infallible pledge of their future resurrection and eternal salvation. To them, this testimony, seal, and pledge, was of unspeakable value;

but of no less value is it to succeeding generations of Christians. For, that seal and pledge was bestowed on those primitive Christians, not merely on their own account, but on that of the universal church, of which they were the first fruits and representatives.

Here our attention is emphatically called to the *effects* of our being the children of God. “ If children, then, heirs,—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ ;”—not only now standing in a close, happy, and honourable, relation to God, our heavenly Father, but destined, also, to be eternally the objects of his love and benefits, in his glorious presence ;—not only now possessing the high honour of being the brethren of Jesus, the Son of God, and Lord of glory, but ordained, also, to be partakers of his felicity and glory, through the endless ages of eternity ! Who can adequately appreciate such felicity and glory ?

A deep and constant sense of our present spiritual relation to God, our heavenly Father, and to his glorious Son, our elder brother, and of the future prospects, which, in virtue of this relation, are opened up to us, is of the last importance ; and the want of it is, in the highest degree, injurious. For, it is manifest, that a due, and constant, sense of that relation is exceedingly calculated to enable, and to constrain, us to yield a ready, constant, and cheerful, obedience to the divine will ; and it is equally evident, that the want of it must ever produce, either despondency, or reckless disobedience. How deplor-



able, then, is the want of this sense, in the Christian ; and how unspeakably desirable is it, that the sense of it should be cherished, by him ! The child of a great, powerful, and earthly monarch, who, either from ignorance, or from some unfortunate prejudice, or from the misrepresentations of bad instructors and evil counsellors, becomes distrustful of his father, and who, from his distrust, is cold and remiss, in his obedience, is surely an object of pity ; and, if from these causes, his misconception of the character of the father be so great, as to induce him to remove himself to the greatest possible distance from the paternal presence,—to make him renounce his present happiness, and all his future prospects,—to abandon himself to a course of life, incompatible with the enjoyment of the advantages and honours, to which he was born,—to bring him voluntarily to surrender his birthright,—he is manifestly an object of still greater commiseration. But, an incomparably more deplorable spectacle, unquestionably, is a child of God, who, from similar causes, loses the benefit of his present invaluable privileges, and that future ineffably great and glorious inheritance, to which he was born ! How attentively and constantly, then, ought we to meditate on the nature of the spiritual relation, which we bear to God, our heavenly Father, and to his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, under the dispensation of the gospel, and how carefully and strenuously should we endeavour practi-

cally to appreciate that high relation ! With what gratitude, love, and joy, should every child of God, who “ is ever with him,” contemplate his riches, honours, and prospects ; and how unspeakably important is it, that every child, who, quitting the paternal home has, in a strange and distant country, abandoned himself to a disgraceful and suffering bondage, should consider, that, if he repent and return, the Father will receive him, with open arms, and joyfully restore him to all the great privileges, honours, and happiness, which, by his departure and estrangement, he has voluntarily and foolishly abandoned !

## LECTURE IX.

### PART II.

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ROMANS, VIII. 17—39.

It might very naturally be expected, that, in this inestimable epistle, in which the leading doctrines of the gospel are prominently brought to view, the apostle would make some practical observations on our present state of probation and suffering, as that state stands connected with the future life of felicity and glory. This, accordingly, he fails not to do; and the place and manner, in which he introduces his observations, have ever excited the admiration of those, who have read the epistle, with critical attention, as exceedingly appropriate and edifying. It is not until he has given us the richest, brightest, and most cheering view of our invaluable Christian privileges, blessings, and honours, that the apostle reminds us, that, notwithstanding these, we are still in a state of probation, and consequently of suffering and affliction, and that it is by the exercise of patience and hope, under our sufferings and sorrows, our

future life will be for ever secured, and our happiness and glory eternally consummated.

“ If children, then heirs,—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if,” or since, “ we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Here the apostle exhibits the motives,—the inexpressibly powerful motives,—which we have to patience and hope. We are reminded, that Christ suffered, and that, because he suffered, he was glorified. “ The author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God ;” and we are assured, that, if like the Roman and other Christians, we patiently, devoutly, and perseveringly, suffer, either for our faith in the Son of God and for our obedience to his gospel, or under those sufferings and afflictions, which are common to man, we shall also reign, and be eternally glorified, with him.

The transcendently happy and glorious nature of the future life, for which the righteous are destined, the apostle here urges, as another motive to patience, under sufferings and afflictions. “ For, I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us.” It is divinely and graciously appointed, that familiarity with sufferings and afflictions should increase our power of endurance ; a merciful Providence generally mingles some palliative



in the bitter cup of pain, or grief; and, by the very law of our nature, neither bodily pain, nor mental suffering, can exceed a certain degree of intensity, without terminating, at once, in that, which puts a period for ever to all earthly misery. But, under any circumstances, however trying, or painful, as Christians, we have the justest reason to account our present sufferings not worthy to be put in the balance against the glory, which awaits us. "Our present light and transient affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."\*

Who can form an adequate conception of the happy and glorious state of those, who shall, in the day of the Lord, have been found meet for that state? These, our bodies, which are here consigned to their kindred dust, "in corruption, dishonour, and weakness," shall, by the voice of the Son of God, be triumphantly raised, in "incorruption, glory, honour," and immortality, fashioned like the body of our divine Lord himself, our elder brother, and fellow-heir, who has become the first-fruits from the dead! Who can fully appreciate,—who can imagine,—the joy that will glow in the bosoms of those, who, from the sleep of death, shall open their eyes on the mild and benign light of the countenance of the Son of God,—the Sun of Righteousness? Who can conceive the joy, which will fill the hearts of those, who shall hear the sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, from the foundation of the world?"\* Who can adequately conceive the tranquillity and happiness, that will arise from a full and settled sense of a perfect and permanent immunity from the numberless evils, which now embitter our existence? Who can reasonably limit his estimate of the good and felicity, which will be conferred on the children of God, who, as their heavenly Father, has given so invaluable a ransom, for their salvation, and whose goodness fills the whole earth? What human imagination can set bounds to the glory, that will be conferred on the objects of the love of Him, the evidence of whose power so marvellously and gloriously fills the universe? What mind can conceive the value of *an eternity* of the felicity and glory of the children of God? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things, which thou, O God, hast prepared for them that love thee, and wait on thee!"†

The eternal glory and felicity, then, which are in reserve, for the church of Christ, after the present state of probation, is exceedingly calculated to make every member of it, who thoroughly understands his privileges and advantages, and who is making the intended use of them, to look forward, with an eager and anxious desire, to the enjoyment of that felicity and glory; and the apostle, accordingly, here ob-

\* Mat. xxv. 34.

† Isa. lxiv. 4; and 1 Cor. ii. 9.



serves, that it is so. “ For the earnest expectation,” —the ardent aspiration,—“ of the creature,”—that is, of the church, which, in Scripture language, is a creature, or creation, by God, in Christ, “ waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God ;” —waiteth for the resurrection, and that eternal life, happiness, and glory, which will follow it. .

But, co-operating with the motive, arising from the confident expectation of a resurrection to immortality, and to eternal happiness and glory, there is another most powerful cause of our eager and anxious desire of coming to the actual possession and enjoyment of the glorious rest, which awaits the people of God. In this state, great as our privileges, and glorious as our prospects, are, we, notwithstanding, suffer and die ; and this we do, in consequence of the transgression of our first common ancestor, Adam. Were it not so, our present state would not be, what the inscrutable wisdom of God has seen fit it should be,—a state of probation,—a state, as the words of the passage imply, of physical bondage. Now, however much it may be our duty, and however patiently and resignedly we may endeavour, to endure our present sorrows and sufferings ; yet nature itself compels, and the God of nature forbids us not, earnestly and ardently to cherish the desire of a deliverance from them ; and, combined, as this natural and lawful desire is, with the confident expectation, not merely of deliverance, from the sorrows and

sufferings of this state, but also of the positive enjoyment of eternal life, happiness and honour, it acquires a force exceedingly powerful. "For the creature,"—the church of God, created in Christ,— "was subjected to vanity,"—to sorrow, suffering, and death,— "not willingly,"—not on account of its own sins,— "but by reason of him,"—of God,— "who subjected the same, in hope, because the creature itself,"—or, in the expectation, that this creature,—the church,— "shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption,"—from the strong fetters of the grave,— "into the glorious liberty of the children of God," by a triumphant resurrection, to a blissful and glorious immortality.

The christian church, at Rome, was, in its own measure, a suffering church ; and, accordingly, it required consolation and encouragement. That consolation and encouragement the great and glorious prospects, now considered, were, in the highest degree, calculated to administer. Yet, with much propriety and force, the apostle adds this consideration also ; — that, though the church suffered, it suffered only in common with all other churches of Christ. He reminds them, that, from the day of their conversion, to that, in which he was, in this epistle, addressing them, the christian church *every where* experienced the sharpest and severest trials and sufferings. "For, we know, that the *whole* creation," — the whole

church,—“groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

This, accordingly, was the language of the apostle, not only to this, but to all the other churches, of Christ. Every where he taught, that, “it is through much tribulation, we must enter into the kingdom of God.” His words have been but too clearly verified, by the history of all generations of the church, since his time; and, however reasonably we may expect, that, in future periods, there will be great improvement, in the state of the church, yet may we, with equal reason, believe, that, from numberless causes, physical and moral, that state will, in all ages, be, more or less, a suffering one. But, blessed be the God of all consolation! we know, that, though we now suffer, we suffer for our good, and that, in the christian warfare, a celestial panoply is given us, which, if we wear it, and duly use it, will enable us to come out of the hardest and most terrific struggles, gloriously victorious! A cheering consideration, indeed, to all, who sustain the combat, with firmness, vigilance, and constancy! And happy he, too, who, arrested in a course of sin, by the divine paternal chastisements, comes to himself, puts on him this panoply, and resumes the combat. For, he, too, if he do not again cast it off, will be sure of victory!

It was, to the Roman christians, in their trials,

consolatory, to be assured, that their heavenly Father had not singled them out for suffering, and that they suffered only, as all their fellow-christians every where suffered. But, there was another still more consolatory consideration, of which he reminds them. He reminds them, that even the apostles and other evangelists also suffered. It might, on a cursory view, be expected, that, although other members of the church of Christ should be exposed to sufferings, these ambassadors of God, at least, who were so highly and gloriously endowed with miraculous gifts and powers, as credentials of their divine mission, should have been exempted from suffering. But, it was not so. It was the Divine will, that they, too, should suffer; and that their sufferings should be peculiarly and signally great. This was a dispensation wise and gracious. For, thus, not only did they themselves win the glorious crown of eternal life, but also clearly demonstrated to all the Church, and to all the world, the sincerity and firmness of their faith, in the doctrines, which they taught, and their assured expectation of that crown, and so became bright examples of patient and triumphant suffering, not only to the primitive christians, but to the universal Church of Christ, in all its generations. The reason, then, is obvious, for which the apostle reminds the christians, in Rome, of the sufferings of himself and fellow-ambassadors, from Christ. “And not only they,”—not only the general creation of God,

in Christ,—“ but ourselves also,”—we apostles and other evangelists also,—“ who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit,”—who were first endowed with the miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, and were ordained to impart them to others,—“ even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body,”—the resurrection of our bodies, from the dead, and the eternal life, bliss, and glory, that will follow.

Great and inestimable as our present christian privileges and blessings are, we must ever practically bear in mind, that this world is not our rest ;—that the present is a state, not of fruition, but essentially and necessarily of expectation ;—and that, from the very nature of the case, it is clearly necessary, that we should wait for the objects of our expectation, with patience. The words of the apostle, in reference to this, condensed and elliptical, as they are, may be, thus, extended, supplied, and connected. “ We ourselves groan, within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,—the redemption of our body ;”—*waiting,—expecting*,—I say ;—“ for we are saved by hope ;”—that is,—the effect being put for the cause,—by the faith, from which our hope, or expectation, arises. “ But, hope that is *seen*,”—what is already possessed and enjoyed,—is *not hope*. “ For, what a man seeth,” or already hath, “ why doth he yet hope for,” or expect, it ? “ But, if we hope for what we *see not*,

then, do we, with patience, wait for it." It is the will of Him, who "has subjected us to vanity," in this state, that we should endure that vanity patiently; and, if the pressure of the trials of our present state, together with our confident expectation of eternal life and happiness, in the future state, is calculated to make us eagerly long for the glorious liberty of the children of God, surely gratitude to Him, who has made us heirs of that life and happiness should powerfully constrain us to be patient, under our present trials and sufferings, however severe they may be.

Reminded, as we here are, that "we are saved by hope," it cannot, to the sincere and intelligent christian, be otherwise than pleasing and instructive, to contemplate the strong foundation, on which his expectation of eternal life and happiness rests. No evidence could have been stronger than that, which the apostle himself had, that a happy and glorious immortality awaited him. Being, in the midst of a career of the most strenuous and bloody opposition to the gospel, the subject of a miraculous conversion to it,—being himself endowed with miraculous gifts and powers, which he daily exercised,—being divinely enabled to impart, in the greatest abundance, those gifts and powers to others,—having received the doctrines of the gospel, by immediate, divine, revelation,—and having himself seen the Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, and knowing, that he was the first-

fruits of the general resurrection,—it was not possible, that he should not believe in the future resurrection and eternal life, revealed in the gospel, as firmly as he believed in his own existence. But, it was not of the hope, that was in the apostle himself alone, that those things form a firm foundation. His recorded conversion and life will for ever stand as one strong and immovable pillar, to support the faith and hope of all christians, in all ages.

But, although the conversion and life of the apostle form, indeed, one firm and imperishable pillar of the faith and hope of the christian, it is but one pillar, among many, equally strong, immovable, and indestructible. The miracles, which our Lord, who is our hope and life, performed, the doctrines, which he taught, and the life, which he led, demonstrated, and those sacred writings, in which they are faithfully recorded, will for ever continue to demonstrate, that he was the divinely predicted, and long expected, Messiah, the Son of God, and that he had, indeed, the words of eternal life. By a simple act of his will,—by a word,—he healed all manner of sickness and disease. He restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb. He cleansed the lepers, and made the cripple perfect. He restored the lunatic to soundness of mind, and the possessed with evil demons to liberty and tranquillity. He created, without the natural means, and instantaneously, food for thousands. He raised the dead to

life. He walked upon the sea ; and, at his command, the storms were lulled, and the raging sea became calm. He knew the most secret actions and thoughts of men. He foretold future events, expressly and minutely. His miracles were without number, and were done with all manner of publicity, and, although, with the most manifest absurdity, as well as with unpardonable malignity, pronounced, by the Jewish authorities, to have been performed with the co-operation of the chief of evil spirits, were never denied to be, indeed, miracles. All his miracles were, in themselves, of a nature the most beneficent and substantial ; and they were performed, to serve as evidence of things, compared with which, in importance, all other things sink into nothing. The doctrines of Jesus are joyfully and marvellously suited to the wants and desires of mortal and despairing man. To his system of morality no other system of ethics can at all be compared. His manner of communicating instruction is, in the highest degree, eloquent and powerful, and inimitably engaging ; and his instructions are rendered still more effectual, by his own perfect and glorious example.

The miraculous gifts and powers, which our Lord himself possessed, he imparted to his apostles and other disciples ; and those apostles also the same to others ; all of whom exercised their gifts and powers, on occasions innumerable, and, like their Divine



Master, in a manner the most public and unquestionable, and for ends the most beneficent and important, that can be imagined.


But, clear and convincing as the evidence of the truth of the gospel, arising from the miracles, to which we have alluded, is, the main pillar of our christian faith and hope manifestly is the glorious event of the resurrection of our Lord himself, from the dead, a fact, as might justly be expected, proved, by evidence as clear and convincing as could have established the truth of any past, remote, event.

There is no intelligent man, who attentively and candidly reads the gospel history, who must not perceive, that it bears, in itself, the clearest and most convincing evidence of the truth of all that it relates. That it relates what is real and true is manifest, not merely from those things, to which we have now alluded, but also from qualities, which characterise the history itself. It is distinguished, by an inimitable artlessness, that belongs only to reality and truth. With all honesty, the evangelists record their own early prejudices and errors, their own infirmities, and their own sins. There is manifestly no concealment, no suppression, no misrepresentation. The precepts and doctrines recorded are, in themselves, manifestly, not merely such as must have had a holy and heavenly origin, but were also, as to the occasion of teaching them, connected with facts, which must have been both real and miraculous. The prejudices,

the passions, the vices, and the crimes, which the evangelists ascribe to the Jews, whether rulers, or people, have all the characteristics of truth, and are in perfect accordance with the account given of them by all other historians. The most searching examination finds the various parts of the gospel history clearly and strikingly consistent; and in the historical and epistolary portions of the New Testament, the intelligent and attentive reader meets with numberless coincidences, manifestly undesigned, and, therefore, wonderfully corroborative both of the truth of what the history relates, and of the authenticity of the sacred epistles.

The account, which we have of the resurrection of our Lord is, in an especial and wonderful manner, calculated to convince us of the reality of that most important of all events, and consequently of the reality and truth of whatever is contained in the gospel history. Were any thing wanting to establish, in our minds, a conviction of that event, it would be furnished, by the ridiculous, as well as manifestly false, account, which, with matchless, yet providential, effrontery, the wicked and infatuated Jewish authorities ordered to be propagated, among the people, of the absence of the body of our Lord, from the tomb.

It must not be overlooked, that the evidence of the truth of the gospel is greatly and manifestly confirmed, by that of the truth and divine origin of the



Mosaic dispensation. The one dispensation is the continuation and completion of the other ; and the clear and unquestionable characteristics, possessed, by the former, of being a divine, miraculous, dispensation are a most powerful corroboration of the divine, miraculous, origin of the latter.

While, therefore, the nature of evidence remains,—that is, while the mind of man and the present course of nature exist,—the evidence of the truth of the gospel, will, on examination, bring conviction to the bosom of every rational, intelligent, and honest man ; and, thus, the christian “ has an anchor of his soul,” which no tempest can, either break, or move, cast, “ within the vail” of heaven, whither his gracious and glorious fore-runner, the Lord Jesus Christ, has already entered ; — a strong consolation, indeed, amidst the afflictions and sufferings of this state of probation.

Here, the apostle proceeds to remind us of another powerful motive, which we have, to make us patiently endure the ills of this, our state of trial, and trust in the good will of God towards us ; and that motive is the intercession, or assistance and influences, of the Holy Spirit, which are graciously granted us, to help our infirmities, to supply our imperfections, and especially to give effect to our prayers. “ Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. For, we know not,”—that is, in many cases,—“ we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit

itself," or that Spirit,—“maketh intercession for us, with unutterable,” or silent, “groanings; and he, that searcheth the hearts, knoweth,” or approveth, “what is the mind,” or desire, “of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.” But, although, in all our trials, of whatever nature, we may justly expect the aids and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the well informed and considerate christian will ever remember, that the Holy Scriptures are the dictates, of the Spirit, and that it is by means of those dictates, chiefly, that the Spirit fortifies and sanctifies the heart, and enlightens the mind, of man; and, accordingly, while his constant, earnest, and fervent, prayers ascend to the throne of grace, he will also, in all his sufferings, difficulties, and fears, ever have recourse to those dictates, as the divinely appointed means of obtaining light, strength, and consolation.


Since trials and sufferings constitute the element, in which it is divinely appointed, that we should live in this world, and work out our salvation, and since, not only christians of ordinary, spiritual, attainments, but even the best, are often visited, with trials and sufferings, in their most intense and afflictive form, it was necessary that the apostle should here clearly and strongly state, that all the dispensations of Divine Providence, afflictive as well as joyful, co-operate, for the ultimate benefit of the christian. “And we know, that all things work together, for good, to them

that love God ;” that is, to those, whom God loves ; for “ we love him ; because he first loved us.”

Now, here the apostle demonstrates how necessarily all things must work together, for good, to christians ; —and the judicious reader will perceive, that he means christians, who are practically influenced, by the principles of the gospel. “ They are called, according to the purpose of God. For, whom he did fore-know,” or previously love, “ he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,” —that is, in the attainment of a glorious resurrection and eternal life, —“ that he might be the first-born, among many brethren.” Having, thus, stated the gracious purpose of God, and the glorious result of that purpose, he shows the links which connect the purpose with the accomplishment. “ Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called,” —he invited and received, as members of his church, —“ and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified ;” — them he glorified, in bestowing on them the miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, as the seal of their present inestimable privileges, and as the earnest of a future, triumphant, resurrection, and of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace. It was, indeed, in the nature of things, necessary, that those miraculous gifts and powers, originally bestowed on the church, should constitute a seal, equally sure, of the present privileges, and an earnest equally certain, of the

eternal life and glory, of all members of the church, in all future ages, who reject not the gracious counsel of God, against themselves, and neglect not the great and glorious salvation of the gospel.

In the passage, which here follows, the reasoning of the apostle is so triumphantly just, and so clear, cogent, and convincing, and there are, in his words, so eloquent and so powerful an expression of christian faith, fortitude, and firmness of purpose, that any comment upon them would be injudicious and injurious. Let us, therefore, hear the apostle himself. “What shall we, then, say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up, for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? Is it God, that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Is it Christ, that died,—yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ;”—separate us from being the objects of the love of Christ, by causing us, either to apostatize, or to lead a life unsuitable to our christian principles and profession?—“Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written; For thy sake, we are killed all the day long; we are accounted, as sheep, for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors,



through him that loved us. For, I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord ;”—from being the objects of the love of God, which is through Christ Jesus, our Lord!!


Finally ; due attention to the things, which form the subject of this discourse, clearly demonstrates, how greatly they err, who think, that the christian religion necessarily begets, in the heart and mind, melancholy and gloom. If the prevalence of virtue and piety constitute the chief happiness of mankind, and if vice, crimes, and the various other forms of sin, be the chief causes of human misery, is it possible that melancholy and gloom should arise from that system of religion, which, in its native purity, is, above all other systems, best calculated to promote virtue and piety, and to prevent all manner of sin and ungodliness? If the wicked and ungodly, when roused to a sense of their guilt and danger, would give the whole world, did they possess it, to be reconciled to a justly offended God, to be saved from condign punishment, can gloom and melancholy arise from that system of religion, which declares, that the Son of God came to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance and salvation,—that his blood cleanseth from all sin,—and that, however

great the past transgressions of the sinner may have been, there will, when he is truly reformed, and is sincerely endeavouring to live after the Spirit, be no condemnation for him, and which establishes, in the heart, the peace of God, that passeth all understanding? If sorrow and suffering be essential to our state of probation, can sadness and gloom arise from that religion, which alone satisfactorily accounts for that state, and which alone can effectually fortify us under our sufferings, and truly console us in our afflictions? If the physical attributes, and the stupendous and boundless works, of the great Creator and God of the universe be calculated to inspire us with the deepest awe, if not with dread, can sadness and gloom be caused by that religion, which assures us, that that Creator is a God of mercy, grace, and love, and that he is our heavenly *Father*, and we his adopted children, and joint-heirs with his own Son, the Lord from heaven? If the christian, when he has used his best endeavours to serve his God, has cause to lament, that the accomplishment comes sadly short of the purpose, and if, from various infirmities and perplexing circumstances, he often knows not how to pray, as he ought, can it cause gloom and sadness, that he has the Son of God, as his all-prevailing intercessor constantly at the right hand of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit so qualifies his supplications, as to render them acceptable and effectual? If, without the christian religion, mortal man is, through



fear of death, all his life-time, subject to bondage, can it beget gloom and sadness, in him, that, by the dispensation of the gospel, death is *abolished*, and life and immortality brought to light? In a word, can gloom and melancholy be inspired, by that dispensation of religion, by which the christian has now the assurance and earnest, not only of a restoration from death, but also of the enjoyment of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace? It surely is not! On the contrary, it is, in the highest degree calculated to inspire him with “joy unspeakable and full of glory!” It is in the worker of iniquity alone that it is calculated to beget sadness and gloom;—and not sadness and gloom only, but well-founded terror!

If his views of the gospel unfortunately beget melancholy and gloom, in the sincere and obedient christian, it is because those views are erroneous, and not because that gracious dispensation is, in itself, calculated to produce the unhappy effect. It is, therefore, the wisdom and the duty of all, who feel oppressed, with sadness and gloom, from their views of the christian religion, to lay aside all human systems of religion, to divest themselves of their preconceived opinions, however long formed, or dearly cherished, and however numerous and celebrated those may be who profess them, to have recourse to the divine oracles themselves,—the only perfectly pure source of christianity,—and search *them*, with all candour, with an unreserved determination to embrace what-



ever they reveal, and with earnest prayer to the Father of lights, to open their understanding, and to deliver them from all their prejudices and errors. If they do so, they cannot fail, in whatever is essential to salvation, to have their prejudices removed, and their errors corrected. For, the leading doctrines of the gospel are clear and intelligible to every man of ordinary capacity and candour, who can read the Holy Scriptures ; and, as to words or passages, which may seem to contradict those doctrines, common sense will ever dictate, that their true meaning is misunderstood, and that they must be taken in a sense conformable with the great, fundamental, doctrines of that glorious dispensation, which is divinely declared to be a marvellous light !

## LECTURE X.

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### ROMANS, IX.

By direct divine revelation, as well as by the predictions of our Lord, the apostle well knew the impending fate of the city of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish nation. He knew, with certainty, that the time was near, when the “enemies” of that city “should cast a trench about it, and compass it round, and keep it in, on every side, and should lay it even with the ground, and its children within it, and should not leave one stone upon another; because it knew not the time of its visitation.”\* He knew, with certainty, that “the daughter of Zion should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.” He knew, with equal certainty, that the time was nigh, when “there should be great distress in the land of Judea, when they should fall, by the edge of the sword, and should be led away captive unto all nations,”† among whom they should, during a long series of ages, not only be deprived of the peculiar and inestimable privi-

\* Luke, xix. 43.

† Luke, xxi. 23-24.

leges and high honours, which they ever enjoyed, but also endure unexampled degradation and sufferings.

This sad fate of the people of God it was now necessary for the apostle to announce ; that he might take an opportunity of vindicating the divine justice, and of establishing the divine veracity, in the dispensation ; and, while he powerfully and clearly vindicates, he, with the deepest and most generous sympathy, laments, that dispensation. “I say the truth, in Christ ; I lie not ; my conscience also bearing me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow, in my heart. For, I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ,”—were deprived of my christian privileges,—“for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh, who are Israelites,”—a people enjoying a special and most precious covenant, with God,—“to whom pertaineth the adoption,”—as children,—“and the glory,”—the miraculous and gracious, divine, presence,—“and the covenants,”—the covenants relative to things spiritual and temporal,—“and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,”—the promises, not only of great blessings in the land of Canaan, but of incomparably greater blessings in the kingdom of the Messiah ;—“whose are the fathers,”—those eminent patriarchs, who shed so great a lustre over the whole nation,—“and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.—Amen !”


Here, the apostle guards against the supposition, that his sorrow proceeded from the belief, that God had failed in implementing the terms of his covenant, and in fulfilling the promises, which he made to the patriarchs, relative to their posterity. God said to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed, after thee;"\* and the same promise, in a similar covenant, the Lord made also to Jacob, or Israel, when he said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land, whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad, to the east and to the west, and to the north and to the south."† From the procedure of God in the original formation of his peculiar people, as well as from express and special prophecies, the apostle proves, that the rejection of the great body of the Jews is consistent with the faithfulness of God, in regard to his covenant, and with his veracity, relative to his promises. "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For, they are not all Israel, who are of Israel." There is now, under the gospel dispensation another Israel,—an "Israel of God,"—a spiritual community, consisting of those Gentiles as well as Jews, who have received Jesus, as the Son of God, and have submitted to his rightful

\* Gen. xvii. 7, 8.

† Gen. xxviii. 13, &amp;c.

and easy yoke ; while the great body of the Jews, by rejecting his yoke, have excluded themselves from that community.

The Jews gloried exceedingly, in their descent from Abraham ; and they vainly believed, that, because they were his posterity, it was not possible, that God should reject them. Here, the apostle undeceives them, and proves, from the Scriptures, that the divine promises, relative to the posterity of Abraham, might be fulfilled, by limiting the fulfilment of them, to any part of his descendants, whom God might choose. “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they *all children*.” Ishmael was the son of Abraham ; and this eminent patriarch would gladly have seen the divine promise fulfilled in him. But, that accorded not with the purpose of God ; the declaration of God to the patriarch was, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The divine procedure, in this case, then, illustrates and vindicates the present rejection of some, and the reception of others, of the posterity of Abraham ; and the apostle, accordingly, adds, “That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God ; but, the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Isaac was born to Abraham, in fulfilment of the promise, and by the mighty power and special grace, of God ; as here implied, when the apostle says, “For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son ;”



and it is in a similar manner, that those, who have received the Messiah, whether Jews, or Gentiles, have, now, under the gospel dispensation, become the children of Abraham and of God.

But, here, the prejudiced and captious Jew might object, that the case of Ishmael neither illustrated nor justified the dispensation, now in question ; because that son, though the elder, was born of a bond-woman, and, therefore, justly set aside. To obviate this objection, the apostle further cites, from the divine oracles, the case of Esau and Jacob ;—a case, on which no ingenuity could raise any valid objection. Both of them were the sons of Isaac, in whom the seed was to be called. They were born of the same mother, and twin-brothers. Yet, in deviation from the privileges, in those days, ordinarily attached to primogeniture, Esau, the first-born, was deprived of the privileges of the divine covenant and promises ; and they were conferred on Jacob, though the younger. “ And not only this,” observes the apostle, “ but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac,”—“ it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” That is, “ Two nations are in thy womb ; and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels ; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people ; and the elder shall serve the younger.\* As it is written,” continues the apostle, “ Jacob have I loved ; but Esau have I

\* Gen. xxv. 23.

hated ;” that is, I gave the preference to Jacob over Esau, though his brother, and his elder brother.

Here, possibly the Jew might say, that Jacob was chosen, and Esau rejected, for the profaneness of this brother. But, against this objection, also, the apostle guards, when he observes, “ For, the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him, that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger ;” —a declaration, which, in its original fulness, expressly refers, not merely to the destiny of those brothers themselves, but also to that of their posterity. Thus, from those divine oracles, which he himself professed so firmly to believe, and so profoundly to respect, it is demonstrated to the Jew, that God, consistently and conformably with his former dispensations towards his peculiar people, might now deprive those of them, whom he pleased, of the special and great privileges of his church, and, in his absolute sovereignty, and of his pure grace, might confer those privileges on those of that people, whom he chose.

“ What shall we say, then ? Is there unrighteousness with God ?” You seem to teach, that there is. For, are there not partiality and injustice in this, that, while he rejects the great body of the people, and when, as you yourself teach, “ all have sinned



and come short of the glory of God," he should make the rest of that people the objects of such mercy and grace, merely for their faith in Jesus, as the promised Messiah? This objection, no doubt, the unbelieving Jews had often urged. But, most unreasonably, and with the worst possible grace, was it urged, by a people, whose very existence and name, in the world, are an everlasting monument of the unmerited mercy and grace of God ;—an evident truth, of which the recollection even of one most important event, in their history, might have convinced them. This event was their universal defection from Jehovah, the living and true God, who, with power so marvellous, and with goodness and favour so unparalleled, had delivered them, from their sufferings, in " the house of bondage," and their making to themselves an idol-god,—the image of a four-footed beast,—in manifest contempt of that divine law, which, so recently, and under sanctions so solemn and awful, forbade and denounced that capital sin. On that critical and memorable occasion, although they had rendered themselves obnoxious to the most signal punishment, and although, indeed, the Lord did threaten them with utter destruction, on the intercession of Moses, the illustrious type of the Messiah, he, with an exception comparatively very small, forgave them, and again received them into his favour ; and, emphatically intimating, that their restoration was from pure

mercy and grace, "He said to Moses, I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion, on whom I will have compassion."

The objection of the Jew, let it be observed, is started immediately after the apostle cites the case of Jacob and Esau, in illustration of the sovereignty and freeness, with which God dispenses peculiar, spiritual, privileges, to any people. The objection, then, being so triumphantly and so clearly refuted, the apostle proceeds to draw, from that case, an inference, in illustration and vindication of the divine mercy and grace, in receiving into the gospel covenant those, who had believed in Jesus, as the Son of God. "So, then, it is not of him, that willeth, nor of him, that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Isaac willed, that Esau and his posterity should possess the special privileges of the divine covenant, and, in obedience to the paternal command, Esau ran to procure venison, that he might obtain those privileges. But, God saw it fit, that it should be otherwise. Of his pure grace, he conferred them on Jacob and his posterity; and thus it is, in the gospel dispensation; eternal life, together with those means, which we possess, of working out our salvation, is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord;—they come not, either of the will, or of the works, of man, "but of God, that showeth mercy."


Having, thus, vindicated the divine procedure, in the great mercy and grace, so freely granted to those

of the Jews, who believed in the Messiah, the apostle proceeds to vindicate the divine justice, in the rejection and punishment of those of them, who refused and rejected his rightful and salutary yoke. The unbelieving Jews perseveringly closed their eyes, and obstinately steeled their hearts, against the clearest and most convincing evidence, that Jesus was the Son of God. Miracles the most unquestionable, in their nature,—miracles the most beneficent, in their immediate effects,—miracles the most important imaginable, in their remote consequences,—miracles acknowledged, by themselves, to be, indeed, miracles,—they could, and did, ascribe to the power and co-operation of demons. In this wilful blindness of mind, and great obduracy of heart, the apostle virtually affirms, they resembled Pharaoh and his people, and that, although they had hitherto experienced the forbearance of God, this forbearance would soon terminate, in punishment, not only destructive to themselves, but calculated, also, to strike, with awe, all nations of the world, in all time to come. “For the Scripture saith to Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up;” that is, Even for this purpose have I hitherto spared thee and thy people, from becoming the victims of the plagues, with which I have visited the land;—“that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared, throughout all the earth;” that is, by their final, signal, punishment.

Here, then, the apostle repeats his inference, from the case of Jacob and Esau, and adds to it another conclusion, deduced from the instance of Pharaoh, in evident reference to the divine procedure towards those of the Jews, whom, on account of their wilful and obstinate unbelief, "God had hardened." "Therefore, hath he mercy, on whom he will have mercy; and, whom he will, he hardeneth."

Against this procedure, the unbelieving Jews started a bold and impious objection, to which the apostle makes a most appropriate, satisfactory, and impressive, answer; "Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For, who has resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say, to him, that formed it, Why hast thou made me, thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

In this passage, the unbelieving Jews, on the supposition, that the doctrine of the apostle were true, charges God, with being wilfully the author of their blindness and obduracy. But, the charge is false and unjust. The manner, in which God hardens impenitent sinners, is only, by his great and long forbearance, even while they abuse all those means, which are calculated and intended to bring them to repentance and salvation. This was the manner, in which Pharaoh and his people were hardened; and



it is, accordingly, written, that they hardened themselves. This, also, was the manner, in which the unbelieving Jews hardened themselves; and, therefore, the apostle, in a preceding part of the epistle, says to them;—"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not considering, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but, after thy hardness, and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?"\*

In the passage immediately under our consideration, the apostle illustrates and vindicates the divine procedure, towards the unbelieving Jews, by an allusion to the words of the Lord, by the prophets;—an allusion, which, because those words refer to a subject substantially the very same, was, in itself, highly calculated to convince the unbelieving Jews of the divine justice, in their rejection, and punishment; and, since it is of great importance, that we, too, should fully understand the words of the apostle, no apology shall be offered for citing here those of the prophets, at length. Isaiah speaks, thus; "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? Or thy work, He hath no hands?"† And Jeremiah, thus; "The word, which came to

\* Rom. ii. 4, 5.

† Is. xlv. 9

Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house ; and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house ; and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels ; and the vessel, that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter. So he made it again another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make it. Then, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O, house of Israel, cannot I do with you, as this potter ? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak, concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil, that I thought to do unto them ; and, at what instant I shall speak, concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil, in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”\*

On nations, as well as on individuals, God, in his absolute sovereignty, confers those means of religion, which, in his unsearchable wisdom, he sees meet ; and, in the day, in which he shall judge the world in righteousness, he will require of them an improvement proportionate,—and only proportionate,—to those means. Of the particular dispensation of

\* Jer. xviii. 1-10.

religion, therefore, under which men are placed, they have no just cause to complain ; and, when any people enjoy a dispensation peculiarly and manifestly favourable, discontent with it, is unreasonable, ungrateful, and impious. Hence, the solemn charge of ingratitude and impiety, with which the apostle, in the words, which follow, brings against “ the man ; ” that is, the collective body of the unbelieving Jews, whom the “ man ” here represents ; and hence, too, his unanswerable vindication of the divine procedure, in the impending rejection and punishment of that people. Their table had become to them a snare. They had abused,—they had long abused,—they had often enormously abused,—their peculiar and great privileges, as the church and chosen people of God. Was it not, therefore, reasonable,—was it not just,—was it not necessary,—that God should, at last, visit a people so incorrigibly wicked and impenitent, with the most severe and signal punishment ? Was not their rejection and punishment especially reasonable, just, and necessary, when that rejection and punishment were to be the happy occasion, not only of the retention, as the people of God, —and that with privileges and prospects incomparably better than they formerly enjoyed,—of those of the Jews, who should receive the Messiah, but, also, of accomplishing the divine purpose of throwing open the doors of mercy and grace to the Gentile world, and of introducing that glorious dispensation,

by which they are all ultimately to be received into the church of God? “What, if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory; even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Here, the apostle proceeds to prove, what he has asserted, from the prophets. The purposed calling of the Gentiles, to be the people of God, and their destined adoption, as his children, he demonstrates, from what the Lord had declared, by the prophet Hosea; “As he saith, also, in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people, and her beloved, which was not beloved; \* and it shall come to pass, that, in the place, where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called, the children of the living God.” †

As the words of the apostle imply, that, on account of their enormous wickedness, especially in rejecting and cutting off the Messiah, the Jews,—“a remnant,” or small portion, excepted,—were soon to be deprived of their peculiarity and great privileges, as the people of God, and to be visited with the most signal and awful punishment, and as they were entirely incredulous, in regard to this momentous truth, the apostle

\* Ch. ii. 23.

† Ch. i. 10.



proves to them, from the words of the Lord, by the prophet Isaiah, that such a dispensation was no new thing, but, on the contrary, exemplified in their past history. “Esaïas, also, crieth, concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant,”—that is, *only* a remnant,—“shall be saved. For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness. Because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth; \* and as Esaïas said before, “Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.†”

From what he has now advanced, the apostle deduces, as an inference, the grand doctrine, which he, so copiously, powerfully, and successfully, labours to establish, throughout the epistle; and we shall more fully feel the force of the terms, of which he makes use, by observing, that they are agonistic. “What, then, do we say?” It is this;—“that the Gentiles, which followed not after,”—or who pursued not,—“righteousness,” or justification, “have attained righteousness, even the righteousness, which is of faith;”—justification of life, freely by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, or Son of God. “But Israel, which followed after,” or pursued, “a law,” or method, “of righteousness,” or justification, “hath not attained a law,” or method, “of righteousness. Wherefore? Because” the

\* Ch. x. 22.

† Ch. i. 9.

pursuit was "not by faith, but as it were by works of law. For," in the pursuit, or race, "they stumbled at a stone of stumbling;"—they took offence at the character and doctrine of the Messiah. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence; but, whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed."\* The event will justify his trust, and fulfil his expectations. ,

Unspeakably great, then, is the cause of gratitude to God, which we, Gentile christians, have, that we have obtained justification of life, that we obtained it, when we sought it not, that we obtained it, when we had no idea of any such dispensation, that we obtained it, when we were aliens from the commonwealth of his people, dead in trespasses and sins, without hope, and without God in the world, that we obtained it of the spontaneous, free, and pure, grace of God! Unspeakably great, too, is our cause of gratitude to our merciful and gracious God, that we have obtained it, by means so simple and advantageous, as faith in Jesus, as the Messiah, or Son of God!

How fervently, and how constantly, should we praise and bless God, that he now calls us, Gentile christians, his people, who once were not his people, that he calls the Gentile christian church, who once was not beloved, now beloved, and espoused to himself, and that, in these regions, in which it was said

\* Isaiah, viii. 14, and xxviii. 16.

to us, ye are not my people, we are now called the children of the living God ! How careful should we be, to entertain a just, deep, and constant, sense of our inestimable privileges, as the people, church, and children, of God ! How ardently should we love God, our Father, who has so graciously brought us into a relation to himself, so near and so glorious ! How deep and fervent also, should our gratitude and love be to our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose gracious instrumentality we have obtained our adoption and all our privileges ! How consolatory, how joyful, the consideration, that we are not only permitted, but even encouraged and enjoined to regard, and to approach, the great and glorious Creator of heaven and earth, not merely as the absolute monarch, of whose government we are the subjects, but as our gracious Father, who, by the marvellous means, which he has used to bring us into the relation of children, has given the clearest expression, and the strongest proof, of his love to us, that we can imagine ! How unspeakably joyful the consideration, that, in virtue of being the children of God, we are the children, also, of the resurrection, and, thus, destined for the glorious liberty of the children of God, through eternity ! With what care and constancy should we cherish those qualities of the heart and mind, and maintain that life, which become our high relation and character, as the children of

God, and which are suitable to our ineffably glorious prospects!

It is exceedingly to be deplored, that “ the unlearned,” of whom there are many, should so utterly misunderstand, what is taught, in this passage, as to fancy, that the inspired Apostle treats, in it, of the eternal salvation and reprobation of individual persons, by the absolute decree of God, and that the minds of so many should, accordingly, be occupied with views so false, and so unworthy of the perfections of our gracious God and Father, and their hearts filled with impressions so much, and so unavoidably, calculated to make them, either unwarrantably to regard themselves, as the unconditional, although perhaps unworthy, favourites of heaven, or, in despair, to look upon themselves, as marked out to be inevitably the victims of eternal perdition. It is equally to be deplored, that many should so needlessly, and so contrary to the express and solemn injunction of the Apostle, mix up, with the subject here treated, the philosophical question of human liberty ;—a question so much calculated, not to instruct, but to perplex and bewilder the human mind.

Whoever gives due attention to the reasonings and illustrations of the apostle must soon be convinced, that “ the election of grace,” of which he speaks, is an election, which every one, who “ confesseth with his mouth the Lord Jesus and believeth, in his heart,

that God hath raised him from the dead, has already attained, and, in virtue of which, if he earnestly and diligently work out his salvation, he shall ultimately obtain, and eternally enjoy, the crown of life. That any one, then, who, thus, professes and believes is, in that sense, himself among the elect is matter, neither of uncertainty, nor of doubt, but of fervent and unceasing praise to God his Father, and of joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the strongest possible motive to urge him, to "make his calling and election sure," by the diligent and unwearied practice of whatever is holy, just, and good.

Finally ; there is no Gentile christian, who feels as he ought to feel, that will not sympathize with the apostle, in his sorrow, for his kinsmen, the Jews ; for their blindness and unbelief, and for those sufferings, with which he foresaw they were to be visited, which, we know, they have, ever since his day, endured, and which, we have reason to believe, they are yet long to endure. Their state will necessarily come more fully under our consideration, in another discourse. Here, therefore, we will only observe, that a people, who once stood in a spiritual relation to God, so high and so honourable, who possessed the divine favour, in a manner so distinguished, who are destined yet to be received into more than their pristine favour and honour, and "from whom, as concerning the flesh," came he, who has loved us,

and washed us, from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, his Father, instead of being, as they but too often are, the objects of our contempt, hatred, and persecution, should excite our compassion, win our affection, and experience, at our hands, all manner of justice and beneficence !

## LECTURE XI.

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ROMANS, X.

THE great and unwearied zeal, and the unexampled efforts, of the apostle, in converting the Gentiles to the gospel, brought upon him the hottest displeasure of his kinsmen, the Jews, who, for that zeal and those efforts, regarded him as actuated by deep malice against his nation. Hence, in the context, we find him, with the greatest solemnity, declaring his great and constant sorrow, for the miseries, which they were bringing on themselves; and here, again, he tells his christian brethren, both Jewish and Gentile, and virtually all those unbelieving Jews, who might peruse the epistle, that it was his most earnest desire, and his most fervent prayer, that all his nation might embrace and enjoy the salvation, now effected by God, and revealed, in the gospel. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God, for Israel, is, that they might be saved.”

So far was this eminent apostle and excellent man from harbouring malice against his nation, that he readily and openly acknowledged whatever good

thing he saw, in their character. “For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God,”—a great and ardent zeal, in religion,—“but not according to knowledge.” That they did, indeed, possess this misguided zeal, the apostle well knew. For, both before and after he wrote this epistle, he experienced the effects of it, in their severest form.

The apostle having, thus, readily and gladly borne testimony to the great zeal of his unbelieving kinsmen, he proceeds to show, how entirely that zeal was misplaced. “For, they, being ignorant of the righteousness,” or justification, “of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Their minds were so exclusively occupied, by the vain expectation of a mighty temporal Messiah, and of a great earthly empire, under him, their hearts were so exceedingly influenced, by worldly motives and passions, and their prejudices, in favour of the Mosaic ritual law, in all its exclusiveness, and its fancied perpetuity, were so obstinate, that no evidence, however clear and convincing, whether afforded by their own prophets, or by the most numerous, multifarious, and unquestionable, miracles, could induce them to submit to that most merciful and gracious method of justification and salvation, which a God of love had now devised, for the benefit of all men whether Jews, or Gentiles.

Here, the apostle reminds his christian brethren,



and points out to all men, what the design of the Mosaic law was. "For Christ is the end," or scope, "of the law, for righteousness," or justification, "to every one, that believeth." Or, as he tells the Galatians, "The law was a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But, after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For, ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus."\*

It was necessary, that a method of justification, different from the Mosaic law, should be devised for frail man. "For, Moses describeth the righteousness," or justification, "which is of the law, that the man, which doeth these things, shall live by them." Now, that law being, in its demands absolute and uncompromising, and the obedience, which it required, universal and perfect, it was morally impossible, that it should be an effectual method of justification to any one of the frail race of Adam. This the apostle more fully shows, in his epistle to the Galatians, in which he writes, thus; "For, as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is every man, that *continueth not in all things*, which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But, that no man is justified, by the law, in the sight of God, is evident. For, The just shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but the man, that

\* Chap. iii. 24—26.

doeth them,"—that is, the works of the law,—  
"shall live in them."\* The law, though ordained  
unto life, was, through human frailty, found to be  
unto death.

In bright and joyful contrast, then, with that law,  
which was, thus, "the ministration of death," the  
apostle puts "the ministration of life,"—the gracious  
and glorious dispensation of the gospel; and, when,  
in the contrast, he makes use of the words of Moses,  
it is necessary to observe, that he adopts them, not  
to prove, but, in the way of accommodation, to illus-  
trate, how exceedingly intelligible the nature of the  
gospel is, and how very attainable the benefits are,  
which it offers. "But, the righteousness, which is  
of faith, speaketh in this wise; Say not, in thine  
heart, who shall ascend into heaven? That is, to  
bring Christ down from above." For, he has already  
come down from heaven, bearing credentials, the  
most unquestionable, of his mission from God.  
"Or, Who shall descend into the deep; That is, to  
bring up Christ again, from the dead." For, he has  
already risen from the dead;—an event, of which  
there is evidence, as clear and infallible as any evi-  
dence, proving the certainty of any past event, can  
be;—an event, too, which most clearly establishes the  
joyful fact, that the obedience of the Son of God to  
death has been accepted, by the Father, as a full and  
final sacrifice, for our sins, and that, by that ines-

timable sacrifice, justification of life has been effected for us. “But, What saith it? The word,” or thing, “is nigh thee,—even in thy mouth, and in thy heart;—that is the word of faith, which we preach;—that, if thou shalt confess, with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus,”—if thou openly and publicly declare, that you receive Jesus, as your rightful Lord,—“and shalt believe, in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead,”—the grand event, on which depend all the benefits of the gospel,—“thou shalt be saved;”—you have, in virtue of your profession and belief, already obtained justification of life; and, if you diligently and perseveringly work out your salvation, you shall, in the end, infallibly attain eternal life, glory, honour, and peace. “For, with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness, and, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.” Such were the merciful and gracious terms, on which the original converts to the gospel obtained justification, and the glorious prospects of eternal life; and such, accordingly, are the terms, on which we, their descendants, retain them.

The truth of this new, and promised, method of justification the apostle here proves, from the passage already cited, in the context from the prophet Isaiah\* relative to the chief corner-stone, which has been laid, in the spiritual Zion. “For, the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth in him shall not be asham-

\* Ch. xxvi. 16.

ed." The expectations of him, who believes in Christ, and who, influenced by his belief, obeys him, will not be disappointed;—those expectations will infallibly be fulfilled. Nor is the divine impartiality, in this method of justification, either less certain, or less conspicuous, than the divine mercy and grace. There is no respect of persons with God. "*Who-soever* believeth in Christ shall not be ashamed. For, there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. For, the same Lord, over all, is rich unto all, that call upon him." This property of impartiality and universality, in the dispensation of the gospel, is an inestimable and glorious one, and, however contrary to the views and wishes of the Jews, was, nevertheless, clearly predicted, by their own prophets. For, Joel, in his joyful and sublime prophecy, relative to the commencement of the gospel dispensation, declares, that "*whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved;"—a passage, it may be observed, in which the calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, is regarded by the apostle as virtually the same with calling, as it is expressed in the original, on the name of Jehovah.

Since, then, the gracious dispensation of the gospel was designed for the Gentiles, as well as for the Jews,—since "the Son of God came to proclaim peace to those, who were far off, as well as to those, who were nigh,"—since the glad tidings were to be

announced to all other men, as well as to the Jews,—since all the ends of the earth were to see the salvation of God,—it was, as the apostle observes, necessary that messengers, divinely qualified and commissioned, should be sent, to announce those tidings, and to impart the knowledge of that salvation, to all men. But, the attentive reader will observe, that the words, in which the apostle points out the necessity of this, imply an apology ;—an apology for the Jewish messengers of the gospel, and especially for himself, evidently directed chiefly to the unbelieving Jews, but partly, also, to the Jewish, judaizing, christians. The falsely zealous, and unjustly jealous, unbelieving Jews were, in the highest degree, incensed against the apostle, for teaching, that the wall of partition, which had so long stood between themselves and the Gentiles, was broken down; that, simply by faith in the Messiah, whom the Jews had crucified and slain, the Gentiles, without reserve, had obtained a full right to all the privileges, greatly enhanced, of the Jews, as the people of God ; and that that people were, for their unbelief, about to be stripped of all their privileges, and rejected. That infatuated people, accordingly, every where, and by all the means in their power, calumniated, persecuted, and punished, the apostles and other evangelists, and, above all, this eminently gifted, and most laborious and successful, apostle, who was specially appointed to open

the eyes of the blinded Gentiles, and to bring them into the way of salvation, and used every possible effort to frustrate their ministry.

But, the apology of the apostle, as observed, was intended, not only for the unbelieving Jews, into whose hands this epistle might come, but, also, for another and very numerous class,—the Jewish, judaizing, christians. The admission of the Gentiles into the Church of God, without the observance of any part of the Mosaic, ritual, law, merely by faith in the Messiah, was wholly at variance with their deepest and most cherished prejudices; and it was, accordingly, not without the most decided dislike, they saw the apostles and evangelists receiving the Gentiles into the church of God; on such terms. His apology is in these terms;—"How, then, shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"—sent to proclaim to all men, "Glory to God, in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to the children of men,"—to declare the glorious victory, won, for mankind, by the Son of God, over death and the grave,—to reveal the life and immortality, purchased and brought to light, by him,—to announce, to perishing man, tidings so precious and joyful, that the very dust, which covered the feet of the messengers, who conveyed them, appeared grace-

ful to the eye, and delightful to the heart ;—" as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them, that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."\*

" But," said the unbelieving Jew, " they," the Gentiles,—“ have not *all* obeyed the gospel ;” and, since they have not, is it not evident, that, in truth, God is not the author of the dispensation, which you and your fellow-labourers are endeavouring to establish, and that neither you nor they have, in reality, a divine commission. For, had you, indeed, been sent from God, with a commission of importance so immense, and with tidings so precious, would not all men have immediately believed, and joyfully embraced, the gospel, when it came to their knowledge? The justness of this reasoning the apostle denies. That men should turn a deaf ear to the joyful tidings and salutary instructions of the messengers of God, he shows, was a thing, neither unexampled nor unknown, among the Jews themselves. “ For,”—complaining of this very thing, the prophet,—“ Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” Thus, for this objection of the Jew, there were no grounds whatever.

From the words of Isaiah, now cited, the apostle takes an opportunity of still further showing the necessity of sending apostles and evangelists, to convey the knowledge of the gospel to all nations. “ So,

\* Isaiah, lii. 7

then, faith cometh, by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The word, or gospel, of God, must be brought to the knowledge of men, by messengers duly qualified, and clearly authorized. It is their testimony, that produces faith.

"But," continues the apostle, "have they not heard?" Have not the apostles and evangelists communicated the knowledge of the gospel to the Gentiles? Is it, from their negligence and want of exertion, that the reception of the gospel has been partial only, among the Gentiles? "Have they not heard? Yes verily; their sound went into all the earth;—their words unto the end of the world." As the luminaries of heaven, according to the observation of the devout, royal, psalmist, proclaim the being and glorious perfections of God, to all nations of the world; \* so the voice of the heralds of the gospel, and especially of this apostle, had already sounded in all parts of the known world.

"But," adds the apostle, "did not *Israel* know?" Has not the knowledge of the gospel been communicated to the Jews? Is the unbelief of the generality of them to be ascribed to unfaithfulness and negligence, in those, who have been commissioned to impart the knowledge of the gospel? It is not so. "First, Moses,"—that is, the Lord, by Moses,— "saith," to Israel, "I will provoke you to jealousy, by them, that are no people;—by a foolish nation,

\* Ps. xix. 4.



I will anger you.”\* This prediction was now clearly fulfilled. Not only was the gospel preached directly to the Jews themselves; their attention to it was, also, still further roused,—nay, their jealousy was, in the highest degree, excited, by every where witnessing the great and constant exertions of the apostles, in communicating the knowledge of the gospel, and in extending the privileges of the commonwealth of the people of God, to the Gentile world, without either distinction or reserve, and without any condition, but faith in the divine mission of the crucified, but risen, Messiah, and submission to him, as their rightful divine Lord.

The knowledge of the gospel, then, was fully and universally communicated to both Jews and Gentiles. This was a clear, undeniable, fact; and, if the gospel was hitherto only partially embraced, by either of them, this was but what was predicted, and, as the apostle further observes, predicted, with peculiar clearness, by the prophet Issiah. “But Isaias is very bold,” or very plain, “and saith, I was found of them,”—of the Gentiles,—“that sought me not; I was made manifest to them, that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, all day long, I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”†

The method, which the God and Father of mankind has devised, for their justification, and which is

\* Deut. xxxii. 21.

† Isa. lxx. 1, 2.

here described, is, in the highest degree, calculated to excite our profoundest admiration. In the marvellous grace, freeness, and simplicity, by which it is distinguished, and in being designed for the whole human family, and universally suited to their spiritual requirements, it most clearly bears the characters of its divine original. Who, then, can adequately express the gratitude, which we, once blinded, alienated, and perishing, Gentiles, owe to God, for sending to us the heralds of the gospel, to open our eyes, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them, that are sanctified, by faith, that is in Christ? Who can estimate the gratitude, which we owe to our heavenly Father, in his being found of us, who sought him not,—in his manifesting himself to us, who asked not after him,—in being brought to the knowledge of Christ crucified,—crucified for our sins, and risen again for our justification,—and in being put into the way of salvation, eternal life, and happiness? Great and precious, unquestionably, were the privileges and blessings, possessed by our fathers, in the church of God, under the Mosaic dispensation; but, incomparably greater and more precious, manifestly, are the privileges and blessings, which we now enjoy, under the dispensation of grace and truth. Are we not, therefore, bound to praise and bless God, not only for finding ourselves in his church, but, also,

and especially, for bringing us into existence, in it, when its privileges and blessings have become so unspeakably great and glorious? Do not such privileges and blessings clearly lay us under the strongest possible obligations to serve the Lord Jesus, who bought us, with his own blood, and procured for us our inheritance, and, thus, to work out our ineffably great and glorious salvation? What words can sufficiently express the infatuation of those, who now neglect so great salvation? Who can conceive the greatness of the evil, in which, either the abuse, or the neglect, of it, will justly terminate?

In the passage, now under our consideration, we clearly see the true foundation, and the legitimate terms, of christian communion. Every one, who confesses, with his mouth, the Lord Jesus, and believes, in his heart, that God has raised him, from the dead, we clearly ought to regard and receive, as a brother, in Christ. For, the inspired apostle declares, that he, who, thus, believes and professes, shall be saved. The inspired deacon, Philip, directed, doubtless, by the Holy Spirit, baptized the Ethiopian nobleman,—thus, admitting him as a true member of the church of Christ,—immediately on his declaring his belief, that Jesus was the Son of God, or Messiah. The apostle John, speaking, unquestionably, by the same unerring Spirit, declares, that “ whoever believeth, that Jesus is the Christ,” or Messiah, “ is born of God ;” and who can justly


doubt, that he, who is born of God, ought to be regarded and received, as a true member of the church of Christ? Nay, our Lord himself evidently received, as his disciples, those, who believed, that he was the Messiah, or Son of God, and who openly professed this belief.

If this belief and profession, then, are the foundation, and if these are the terms, which the divine oracles declare to be the true foundation, and the legitimate terms, of christian communion, what man, or what body of men, have a scriptural right,—that is, any right at all,—to require of their fellow-christians, to subscribe and profess any other creed, or articles of belief, in order to secure any privilege whatever, either spiritual, or civil? However specious the arguments, in favour of it, may be, to insist on this, is manifestly to be wise beyond what is written; and the world has had a long experience, that to be, thus, wise, is to be most foolishly and injuriously wise. For, what are the causes of the religious errors, which, in every age, prevail, in the Christian world? Assuredly those errors are not caused by any obscurity, or uncertainty, in the divine oracles. For, the passage now before us, as well as all other parts of Scripture, expressly and most emphatically declares, that nothing can be more clear and intelligible, than are the doctrines, the knowledge of which is essential to our salvation. The passions, the prejudices, and the ignorance, of

men, are the real causes of their religious errors. Subscription to creeds, or articles of faith, beyond the belief and profession, which the apostle here declares, to be sufficient for our salvation, and which, consequently, are the only articles of belief and profession, that ought to be required of any Christian, evidently have the most injurious effects on the interpreters and stewards of the mysteries of God, and consequently and unavoidably on those, whom they teach. Whoever carefully and candidly considers the state of the Christian world, whether present or past, must clearly see, that, with few exceptions, they, whose temporal interests are connected with the profession of a particular creed, however erroneous, continue to teach, in conformity with that creed. Some, deaf to the voice, both of reason, and of conscience, refrain from carefully and candidly canvassing their creed, lest they may discover, in it, things, the renunciation of which, would militate against their temporal interests. Many, actuated by a hot and headlong zeal for the creed and cause of their own sect, search the Scriptures, indeed, diligently, but not, with humility, caution, and candour, to bring the articles of their belief to the test of what those infallible oracles truly contain, but to gather materials to prop up their own peculiar tenets. That zeal, accordingly, will be without knowledge; for they cannot, because they will not, see the truth. Others, from a weak and superstitious dread, and forgetting, that truth ever

invites investigation, do not venture to call in question the truth of any part whatever of the creed in the profession of which they have been brought up ; and they are not a few, who, either from ignorance, or from incapacity, or from both, are incapable of detecting the sophistry and fallacy of the arguments, that support their peculiar tenets, however erroneous. If, then, the brief and plain articles of belief and profession, here declared, by the apostle to be the articles, the belief and profession of which are essential to salvation,—articles, to which no Christian, of any denomination, could, for a moment, hesitate to assent, — were the only articles, required of the ministers of the gospel to subscribe, the causes, which now so generally blind their minds, and warp their judgments, and which, so unhappily, make the Christian world a field of bitter, and alas ! but too often bloody, contention, would manifestly be removed. On various points of religion, keen and warm discussions would, even in that case, undoubtedly, often arise ; but, acknowledged fraternity would christianize those discussions ; freedom of enquiry, sound and patient criticism, and the irresistible power of unfettered truth, would make them short, in their duration, and often beneficial, in their consequences ; and, thus, would peace reign, within the walls of Zion, and prosperity, within her palaces.

In the Jews, we have a very clear, and very edifying, example of the nature, and of the deplorable



effects, of religious zeal, without knowledge. Infatuated and infuriated, by this zeal, they, with wicked hands, put to a cruel and ignominious death the prince of life, the Son of God; they used every effort to frustrate the grace, and to overturn the kingdom, of God; and they persecuted, and, in many instances, slew those, whom God had sent to themselves, and to the world, with the words of eternal life. Blinded and hardened, by this zeal, they have, in the face of the clearest evidence of their error, now for many ages, remained in the most obstinate, and most marvellous, unbelief. Nor do they yet show any symptom, that their unbelief and obduracy will not continue, for many ages still to come. The punishment of this ignorant, but wilful, zeal, in that devoted people, has corresponded with the malignity of its nature, and with the evil of its effects. Who knows not the unexampled miseries, with which they were visited, soon after the commencement of the Christian era; and what well informed person is unacquainted with much of the innumerable and great sufferings, which they have endured, ever since that period?

But, alas! it is not in the Jews alone, we have an exemplification of the nature and fatal effects of religious zeal, without knowledge. Has it not, also, been clearly and extensively exemplified in the Church of Christ? Has it not even there, in times and ways, without number, caused rancour, and bitter

contentions, and tumults, and persecutions, and tortures, and the most cruel and awful deaths? Nay, however modified and mitigated, does it not exist, in all Christian communities, to this day? For, what Christian community will not readily see and confess, that it exists in all other communities, who differ, in belief and profession, from themselves? Nor can it ever be otherwise, until the universal church adopt that foundation, and those terms, of christian fellowship, which the Holy Spirit dictates, in the passage now before us, and until Christians become practically sensible, that, in the dispensation of the gospel, the angels of God have proclaimed peace on earth and good will to men, that the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, that the greatest of the Christian virtues is love, that this virtue is the bond of perfectness, and that, without it, we are nothing.

Finally; let it be ever deeply imprinted on the mind of every Christian, that “faith cometh by hearing;”—that it came to our fathers, in the church, by hearing the words of the inspired heralds of the gospel;—and that it is, by hearing, or reading, the oracles, which they penned, as the instrument, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, and by that means alone, we can be truly instructed in the faith, that is in Christ, and made wise unto salvation.



## LECTURE XII.


## ROMANS, XI.

THE subject of this passage, which is the conclusion of the doctrinal and argumentative part of the epistle, is, in the highest degree, important and sublime. It throws additional and clear light on the nature of the calling, election, justification, and salvation, which the apostle treats, in the preceding part of the epistle ; and it gives a most interesting account of the past dispensations of God towards his church and the Gentiles, respectively, and of his purposes, in regard to them, in time to come.

The apostle had already, in the plainest, yet most feeling and brotherly, manner, assured the Jews of their impending rejection from the kingdom of God, for their unbelief, and of the reception, in their place, of all the Gentiles, who should believe in the Messiah. Thence arises a most important question, which the apostle starts and answers, manifestly with the immediate design of winning the good will and respect of the Gentile part of the christian church towards his misguided and abased kinsmen, the Jews. “ I say, then, has God cast away his people ?” Has

God, universally, finally, and irreversibly, rejected his people, Israel? "God forbid," the apostle replies. This would be an unutterably calamitous and deplorable dispensation; and the apostle justly adds, that no one could have a stronger motive to deprecate it than himself, coming, as he did, in pure descent from the great father of the nation, and that through a family, who had never been guilty of open defection from God. "For," saith the apostle, "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God," continues he, "hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew." God has not universally, finally, and irreversibly, rejected his people Israel, who, ever since they had a being, were the objects of his constant, unexampled, and marvelous love, protection, care, and bounty.

Here, the apostle proceeds to show, that the rejection of the Jews was not universal and unreserved. From the impending, general, rejection, and signal calamities of the Jews, God was graciously to save that portion of them, who, convinced by the power, and listening to the voice, of God, had received Jesus, as the Messiah. With great and manifest propriety, the apostle points out a parallel dispensation, in the past history of the nation. In the days of the prophet Elijah, the people of Israel had become extremely impious and wicked. The Lord had expressly informed that prophet, that a foreign power, their own kings, and even the prophet, who was about to succeed



himself, were all to be instrumental in a general and signal punishment of the nation. Yet, the Lord also informed Elijah, that a small portion of the people, who, in the midst of the general defection, had kept their allegiance, were to be protected and saved. “Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But, what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” Here, we find it plainly implied, that the Lord had reserved to himself the seven thousand men, because they had not bowed the knee to Baal. But, since God sees it fit, that the pious and good should often be involved, in the temporal calamities, which the wicked draw down upon themselves, and since the “remnant,” though they had not declined to idolatry, had, no doubt, in many other ways, offended, their reservation might well be regarded as an election of grace. Accordingly, the apostle adds;—“Even so, then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”—Thus, then, the rejection of the Jews was not universal, and unreserved. That portion of them, who received the Messiah, were retained in the Church of God; and this retention was manifestly from the grace, or unmerited goodness, of God.

Here, the apostle takes occasion, parenthetically, yet most emphatically, to remind the Jewish Christians of what, in some degree, they were ever apt to forget, that all their christian privileges and blessings were, in no measure, derived from the observance of any part of the Mosaic law, but purely from the grace, or unmerited goodness, of God. “If by grace,” he observes, “then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace;”—it has changed its nature. “But, if it be of works, then, is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work;”—its character is altered.

“What then?” How stands the case, in regard to the great body of the nation? It stands, thus;—“Israel hath not obtained that, which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it; and the rest are blinded.” Nor is this a new thing. As they were, in former ages, so now they are, blind to the hand, and deaf to the voice, of God. “According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes, that they should not see, and ears, that they should not hear, unto this day.”\* As in past ages, so now the very greatness of the divine benefits and blessings,—the very exuberance of the divine goodness,—the very glory of the light, which has shone on them,—have become the occasion of their obduracy, blindness, and punishment. “And David saith, let their table be made a snare, and a

\* Isa. xxix. 10.

trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always.”\*

But, let no one suppose, that, either from the passages now cited, or from the divine dispensations, it may be inferred, that God actually wills and ordains, that his goodness should, in any instance, become a stumbling-block to men. In the nervous language of prophecy, the Lord is figuratively said to ordain, what, for the wise and just purposes of his moral government, he, in reality, only permits. It is plainly to prevent error, on this point, as well as to show the ulterior purposes of God, in regard to the unbelieving Jews, that the apostle starts this question ;—“ I say, then, have they stumbled, that they should fall?” Has the stumbling-block been thrown in their way, that they might fall over it? “ God forbid !” This, indeed, would be a supposition awfully derogatory to the divine character. The case is the very reverse. For, in bringing the Gentiles into the kingdom of the Messiah, in the place of the Jews, one great purpose, which the Lord had, was, that these, seeing themselves deprived of their great and long enjoyed privileges, and those put in manifest, rich, and glorious, possession of them, they, also, might be roused and induced to embrace the salvation of God. “ But, through their fall,” saith the apostle, “ salvation is come unto the Gentiles,

\* Ps. lxi. 22, 23.

for to provoke them to jealousy." But, we must carefully beware of supposing, that this was the chief, primary, motive, from which God called the Gentile world to his kingdom. For, that gracious and glorious dispensation was ordained before it was declared to Abraham, that, in his offspring all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

Thus, then, the rejection of the Jews, a remnant only excepted, became the occasion of conferring great and glorious benefits on the Gentile world; and, if it has, what may not be expected to accrue from the happy event of their future, full, reception again into the kingdom of God. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing," or remnant, "of them, the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? For, if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"—but an event ineffably great and glorious.

In this passage, relative to the benefits derived, by the Gentile world, from the rejection of the Jews, the apostle has, with much sacred skill, introduced a parenthesis, in which, while he glories in being chosen, as a fit vessel, to convey the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles, and declares, that, in teaching them, he is also actuated, by the strongest desire to convert to Christ as many as possible of his erring and unhappy, unbelieving kinsmen, he is likewise manifestly endeavouring, with the greatest ear-

nestness to secure to them the good will and respect of the Gentile christian church. "For, I speak to you, Gentiles, in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles ;—I magnify mine office ;—if, by any means, I may provoke to emulation them, which are my flesh, and might save some of them."

The apostle, now, in metaphorical language, the most appropriate and impressive, proceeds to show the light, in which we, Gentile christians, ought to view the rejected Jews, to reveal the future purposes of God, in regard to them, and to teach us the estimate, which we ought to form of our own reception and establishment, as members of the church of God ; and, in discoursing on these things, the apostle speaks so clearly and so copiously, that his words require but little explanation. "If," saith he, "the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy." If the "remnant" of the Jews, who have already received the Messiah, consecrated, unquestionably, and sealed, as they are, by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, be holy, and most evidently members of the church of God, such also will be the whole body of that people, when they shall turn to the Lord. "And, if the branches be broken off, and thou," Gentile christian, "being a wild-olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and, with them, partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree,"—Abraham, the other patriarchs, and the church of Israel generally, being that olive-tree,—  
"boast not against the branches. But, if thou boast,

thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say, then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded; but fear. For, if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God;—on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness; if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou, also, shalt be cut off. And they, also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in. For, God is able to graff them in again. For, if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild, by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree, how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree? For, I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery; lest ye should be wise, in your own conceits; that blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved.” All Israel shall be admitted into the kingdom of God, and be put into the way of salvation and eternal life. Convinced, at length, by the faithful history left by the evangelists of the great, beneficent, manifold, and undeniable, miracles of our Lord and his apostles,—especially by that greatest and most important of all miracles, the resurrection from the dead of the Messiah himself,—convinced, at length,



by the fulfilment of the prophecies, contained in the Scriptures, which are received and venerated, by themselves, relative to the Messiah and his kingdom, and by the accomplishment of the predictions of the apostle himself, relative to the destinies, both of themselves, and of the Gentiles,—roused, at length, and “provoked to jealousy,” by witnessing a believing world received into the kingdom of God, from which they themselves had, for so many ages, been excluded,—they will renounce their prejudices,—the veil, which, in reading Moses, had covered their minds, will be removed,—and they will penitently, joyfully, and universally, receive Jesus, as their Messiah, Saviour, and King; and, thus, will be accomplished a prophecy, relative to the whole nation, of a future period of great and unparalleled prosperity and happiness. “As it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For, this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”\*

What follows is an amplification of this prophetic passage;—a passage, which cannot fail to delight the heart, and elevate the mind, of every one, who possesses a truly christian heart and mind. “As concerning the gospel, they have become enemies, for your sake; but as touching the election, they

\* Isaiah, lix. 20. This quotation must be taken in connexion with the sequel of this passage, from Isaiah, which extends to the next chapter, and which is full of the most delightful richness and sublimity.

are beloved, for the fathers' sake." As regards the gospel, they have become enemies, by their temporary rejection from the kingdom of God ;—a rejection, whose immediate purpose is your reception into that kingdom ;—but, as regards the original election of their nation to be the peculiar people of God, they are, in the divine purpose, still beloved, on account of the covenant, made with Abraham and the other patriarchs. " For, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Lord established his covenant between himself and Abraham, and the seed of Abraham, after him, in their generations ; for an everlasting covenant ; to be a God unto him, and to his seed after him.\* That covenant, therefore, with its manifold and inestimable privileges will ever remain inviolate ; and the call of that faithful and eminent patriarch and of his posterity, to be the people of God, is, by the divine decree, irrevocable. " For, as ye, in times past, have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy, through their unbelief, even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy." For, as you Gentiles, in past ages, obeyed not God, and were, accordingly, strangers and foreigners, from the commonwealth of his people, but are now brought to the enjoyment of the inestimable privileges of his kingdom, on the occasion of the present, temporary, unbelief and diso-


\* Gen. xvii. 7.

bedience of Israel, so also have they now disbelieved and disobeyed, that being provoked to jealousy, by the great and glorious privileges, which you, as the people of God, enjoy, they, too, at a future, joyful, period, turning to the Lord, may again be received into the kingdom of God, and come to the full enjoyment of its privileges. “ For God hath shut them all up together in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.” The Gentiles, and Israel, the people of God, having, the one after the other, revolted from God, their heavenly Father, and having utterly corrupted their ways, he, for their wilful blindness and deep corruption, in his inscrutable wisdom, left them both, successively, to their own ways, and excluded them from the great and special privileges of the covenant, enjoyed by his peculiar people ;—not finally, indeed, but that, having undergone severe and long discipline, both might, in his great and marvellous goodness, be, in due time, received into his gracious covenant, and glorious kingdom, under the Messiah.

Elevated, in his mind, by the contemplation of the wisdom, the vastness, and the sublimity, of the dispensations of God towards man, and, glowing, in his heart, with gratitude and devotion, for the ineffable mercy and grace of the Father of lights, the inspired apostle concludes this prophetic passage, with an impassioned and most appropriate exclamation ;—an exclamation, it may be observed, in which

there is evidently conveyed a very serious, yet very gentle, rebuke to his unbelieving kinsmen, for their overweening conceit of their knowledge of the divine counsels, for rejecting and thwarting the divine dispensation of justification freely by grace, and for endeavouring to establish their own scheme of justification, by works and merit. “ O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! For, who hath known the mind of the Lord ? Or, who hath been his counsellor ? Or, who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? For, of him, and through him, and to him, are all things ;—to whom be glory for ever ; Amen !”

From this concluding passage, then, of the doctrinal and argumentative part of the epistle there arise some most interesting and important reflections. It clearly appears from it, that the calling, election, justification, mercy, and salvation, which are taught, both in this passage, and in the preceding parts of the epistle, are privileges, which are conferred on us, as members of the church, or kingdom, of God, in this world, and which belong to all professing christians. It is evident, that those several privileges are inseparably connected, and imply each other. It is evident, that, in the language of the apostle, and in reference to this state, to find mercy is, to be justified and saved, and that, in this passage, the




apostle informs us, the time is coming, when all Israel shall be thus saved, and shall, consequently, all enjoy the privileges, which have already been conferred on the election of grace, and when the God of love will have mercy on all the Gentiles, as well as on all his ancient people. It is evident, that, in reference to the dispensation of the gospel, those, who are said to be called, according to the purpose of God, are called in that general, collective, sense, in which the Lord called all the posterity of Abraham, by Isaac, to the enjoyment of the covenant, made with that patriarch ;—a covenant, which the apostle here declares to be irrevocable and unchangeable, when he says, that “ the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

But, from innumerable other parts of Scripture, and from this portion itself, it is clear, that individual christians still have it in their power, either to improve their privileges, for the ends of eternal life, or to abuse them, to their aggravated condemnation, and more signal punishment. Each of us must work out our salvation, by perseverance in well-doing. For, how can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ? Each of us must make his calling and election sure, by adding to his faith christian dispositions and virtues. If these dispositions and virtues be clearly and plentifully found in us, he, whose faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds, will assuredly grant us a full entrance into his everlasting kingdom ; but, if they be

not, we shall be excluded ; and he, who thinks, that any present privileges, or profession, can finally avail him, without these qualifications, will find himself fatally and deplorably deceived.

In this passage, the apostle styles the extension of the gospel dispensation to the Gentiles, “ the riches of the Gentiles,” or “ the riches of the world ;” and if that, which is fitted to make mankind happy and eminent may be called riches, justly may the possession of the privileges and blessings of that dispensation be so denominated. What riches can be greater, more durable, or more glorious, than deliverance from Gentile ignorance, superstition, atheism, and despair, to the knowledge of the living and true God, to a state of justification, before him, and of adoption among his children, to sanctity of life, to a pure and rational worship, to a place and share in the kingdom of God, and to a full and well-founded expectation of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace.

By direct revelation, the inspired apostle, in this passage, expressly informs us, that the time will come, when all the Gentile world shall come into the church and kingdom of God ; and, next to the actual enjoyment of the privileges of that kingdom, and the certain prospect of eternal life, nothing surely can be more pleasing to the true christian than the contemplation of that ineffably great, glorious, and sublime, event, by which the countless millions of the human race shall be received into the kingdom of God, under



his own Son, and by which they, and probably many thousands of their successive generations, shall enjoy the present inestimable privileges and blessings of that kingdom, and the assured prospect of life and immortality! It is with reason that the evangelical prophet Isaiah, also, speaks of this event in the most beautiful and sublime strain. "It shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it; and many people shall go, and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,—to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For, out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."\* "Behold my servant, whom I uphold,—mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."—"He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."—"I, the Lord, have called thee, in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people,—for a light of the Gentiles;—to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them, that sit in darkness, out of the prison house."†

From the dictates of the Holy Spirit, the apostle,

\* Is. ii. 2, 3.

† Is. xlii. 1, 4, 6, 7.

as we have seen, also, reveals to us this mystery ;—that, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come into the church of Christ, *all Israel* will turn to the Lord, and be saved ; and, to us, Gentile christians, the contemplation of that glorious event, likewise, ought to be equally pleasing. The apostle uses the strongest possible arguments, to win our good will and respect to his unbelieving kinsmen ; and how, indeed, can any true Gentile christian forget, that, as concerning the flesh, he, who is our hope and our life, is of that royal priesthood ;—that it is into the stock, to which they once belonged, and to which they shall yet belong, we are ingrafted ;—that it is from that stock we derive our life ; and that, severed from it, we should quickly wither and die.

But alas ! the Gentile christian church has, in all ages and places, greatly disregarded the arguments of the apostle, or rather the dictates of the Holy Spirit, relative to its duty towards the blinded and deluded house of Israel. Forgetting, that, although, for the present, excluded from the church of God, and deprived of its privileges, they are, in respect to their original election, and for the father's sake, beloved of God, instead of showing them, as we ought, favour and respect, we have, in ignorance and blindness, scarcely less marvellous and lamentable than their own, despised, hated, oppressed, and, in countless instances, unjustly and barbarously slain them ; while, in doing so, we have thought, that we were




performing an acceptable service to God! We have acted, thus, too, not less unwisely, in regard to our own temporal interests, than irreligiously, in respect to the will of God. For, among all nations, when promoted to offices of power and honour, they have ever proved themselves, in no ordinary degree, faithful, efficient, and worthy of their trust. If their character be now debased, that chiefly proceeds from our injustice and oppression. Did we treat them with justice, humanity, and respect, and grant them the full enjoyment of all civil privileges, and of entire religious toleration, we should not only do, what is, in itself, right, and agreeable to the divine will, but, also, what, notwithstanding their deeply-rooted and unhappy prejudices, would quickly and greatly improve their general character.

The delusion, under which many labour, in supposing, that, in excluding the ancient people of God, from equal civil privileges, and in withholding from them religious liberty, we are but fulfilling the divine predictions and purposes, in regard to them, and, therefore, performing a religious duty, is a delusion of the most dangerous nature. Their offended God, indeed, permits, but commands not, their sufferings. So far is he from commanding men to injure them, that he has ever visited those nations, who have oppressed them, with the most signal punishments; and, accordingly, may not the evils, both religious and temporal, with which the Divine Providence has


permitted the christian world to be visited, since Israel were deprived of their peculiarity and privileges, have been a just punishment, inflicted on that world, for its injustice, oppression, and cruelty towards the unhappy, but not forsaken house, of Israel ?

Finally ; we Gentile christians ought to contemplate “ the severity of God,” in cutting off his ancient people, with the profoundest awe, and his “ goodness,” in ingrafting ourselves, with the deepest gratitude. It was for their unbelief, that they were broken off ; and we stand by faith. It was by faith, that we, at first, became the objects of the divine goodness ; and it is by faith we shall continue to be the objects of that goodness. But, if we continue not in the faith, we cannot continue the objects of his goodness ; for, in that case, we, too, shall be cut off. This is the express and solemn declaration of the inspired apostle ; and alas ! the event has but too clearly verified his prediction. The Gentile christian church, with a very limited exception, has, for many ages, departed from the simplicity and purity of the faith, which was once delivered to the saints, and which is still deposited in the divine oracles ; and, accordingly, not the least, that church, to which the apostle addressed this invaluable epistle, and which has so extensively, so greatly, and so deplorably, influenced the christian world ; and, in that state, the generality of them do still continue. For .



doctrines they have received the commandments of men, and have turned to fables. The decrees of the councils of fallible men, and the dogmas of human authority, have almost wholly superseded and frustrated the infallible written word of God. Pure christian worship is smothered under that monstrous form of human observances, which a blind and baneful policy induced the church to adopt; and, thus, the Gentile christian church, though not actually, may, in an extensive sense, be regarded, as virtually "cut off." Many Gentile christian communities, because they loved not the truth, and, from evil deeds, preferred darkness to light, have had their lamps, which once burned gloriously, removed out of their places; and a profound and melancholy darkness has long brooded over them.

But, deplorable as this state of things is, the reflecting christian will acquiesce in it, well knowing, that God, who brings good out of evil, will ultimately convert it into a motive, in his church, vigilantly and permanently to guard against the causes, which have produced it. In the good providence of God, the light of literature and science, civilisation, and emancipation from spiritual and civil despotism, which have already done so much good, will, as they advance, gradually allow the truths of the divine oracles to assume their natural, irresistible, power, and will ultimately enable them to obtain a permanent and glorious triumph. This is, not only an expectation,



which is evidently reasonable, in itself, but is also a prospect, clearly and firmly founded on the express declaration of the inspired apostle. For, as we learn from him, when the fulness of the Gentiles and all Israel shall have been converted to Christ, then shall the state of the universal church be "life from the dead." Then, shall be fulfilled, what the prophets have, in such glowing and sublime, metaphorical language, foretold. The sun of righteousness shall arise, with healing in his wings,\* and shall permanently shine, on a christian world with unclouded glory. "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed. Their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain. For, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,"†

\* Mal. iv. 2.

† Isa. xi. 6—9.

## LECTURE XIII.

## ROMANS, XII.

HAVING, in the preceding part of this inestimable epistle, comprehensively and clearly described the gracious and glorious scheme of the gospel dispensation, the apostle, in his usual manner, now proceeds to give the church at Rome, and, with them, to the universal church of Christ, in all ages, many most important exhortations, interspersed with various practical observations, for their guidance, in the christian life. Having fully and clearly shown them, that they had obtained justification of life, not by their own works, or merit, but freely by the grace of God, that they had been elected, to be the people of God, that they had become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and that, after a triumphant resurrection from the grave, they were destined to the enjoyment of glory, honour, and immortality, by these motives, he urges and exhorts them to devote themselves to the service of God. “ I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, accept-

able, unto God, which is your reasonable service." To the Gentile, as well as to the Jewish, christians, to both of whom the offering of propitiatory sacrifices was familiar, the metaphorical language, in which the exhortation is expressed, was very intelligible. Nor can it be otherwise to any one, who is acquainted with the Mosaic ritual, as recorded in the Scriptures. Christ, the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, has, "by one offering,"—by his obedience unto death, as a sacrifice for our sins,—“perfected for ever them that are sanctified,”\* and has put an end for ever to all other sacrifices, which were but types of him; and the only sacrifice now required of any christian is, to offer himself to God, a living, holy, sacrifice;—a sacrifice, the offering of which reason, as well as revelation, clearly dictates, and fully sanctions.

“Be not,” continues the apostle, “conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove,”—that, having, with all attention, examined the mind of the Spirit, in regard to your duties, you may exhibit, in your lives,—“the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” There is no obscurity, or uncertainty, in this exhortation; yet it may, with propriety and advantage, be further illustrated and enforced, by parallel passages, from the other writings of this apostle. “Put off,” saith he to the Ephesian chris-

\* Heb. x. 14.

tians," concerning the former conversation," or life, "the old man,"—the old Gentile character,—“which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man,”—the christian character,—which, after God, “is created in righteousness and true holiness.”\* And again ; “Be ye not partakers with them,”—with the Gentile world, in its sinful practices,—“For ye were formerly,”—that is, in the Gentile state,—“darkness ; but now are ye light, in the Lord. Walk as the children of light. For, the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth ;—proving what is acceptable unto the Lord ; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness ; but rather reprove them.”† “Ye have put off,”—saith the apostle to the Colossian church,—“the old man, with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed, in knowledge, after the image of him, that created him.”‡

The next exhortation of the apostle relates to the exercise of those miraculous, spiritual, gifts and powers, with which many christians were endowed, in the infancy of the church. For, such an exhortation, surprising as it may seem, there was need. For, as we may justly infer from this passage, and as we learn from the first epistle of this apostle to the Corinthians, there was occasionally some confusion in the exercise of those gifts and powers ; and, in

\* Heb. iv. 22-24.

† Heb. v. 7, 11.

‡ Col. iii. 9-10.

some, the possession of them generated some degree, at least, of pride, and, in others, envy ; according to the estimation, in which the kind of spiritual endowments, which they respectively possessed, were held. The apostle, then, who himself was, in the most eminent degree endowed with the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of his apostolic authority, speaks thus ;—" I say, through the grace given to me,"—in virtue of the apostolic commission, with which a gracious God has intrusted me,—“ to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly,” or justly ; “ according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For, as we have many members, in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body, in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having, then, gifts differing, according to the grace, that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy, according to the proportion,” or measure, “ of faith ;”—adding nothing from ourselves, and withholding nothing of what is revealed to us ;—“ or ministry,”—the office of an evangelist,—“ let us wait on our ministering ; or he that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation ; he that giveth,”—or distributes the funds of the church,—“ let him do it with simplicity,”—with honesty and impartiality ;—“ he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy,”—



whose office it is to relieve the sick, the distressed and the stranger,—“ with cheerfulness.”

To the same effect, and more fully, this apostle writes to the Corinthians. Having reminded them, that the peculiar gifts of every individual christian proceeded from the same divine source, and were conferred for the benefit of the collective body of the church, he, very appropriately, illustrates and enforces his doctrine, thus,—“ As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” “ For the body is not one member but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it, therefore, not of the body? And, if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it, therefore, not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But, now, hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him. And, if they were all one member, where were the body. But, now, are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee. Nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts

have more abundant comeliness. For, our comely parts have no need. But, God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part, which lacked ; that there should be no schism in the body ; but that the members should have the same care, one for another. And, whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or, one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it. Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members, in particular.”\*

Having, thus, exhorted those, whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with miraculous gifts and powers, for the confirmation and edification of the church, he proceeds to inculcate, on all of them, those duties, which are incumbent on every one, who names the name of Christ. His precepts manifestly bear the stamp of their divine original ; and, in a discourse of this nature, it were injudicious and improper to disturb their sententious brevity and force, by any lengthened comment. “ Let love be without dissimulation ;”—not in word, but in deed ; “ abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love ;”—with love not merely arising from the ties of a common humanity, but kindled, likewise, by a sense of an additional, new, relationship, the closest, the most endearing, and the most exalted. “ In honour, preferring one another. Not slothful in

\* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 14—27.

business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope ;”—in the hope of a glorious resurrection, and of eternal life and bliss ;—patient in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer. Distributing to the necessities of the saints,”—or fellow-christians ; “ given to hospitality. Bless them, which persecute you ; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them, that do rejoice ; and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind towards one another ;” earnestly exercising that beneficence towards others, that you would experience, from them. “ Mind not high things ; but condescend to men of low estate ;” affect not the greatness and pre-eminence of your superiors ; and show condescension to your inferiors ; and, in your intercourse with them, accommodate yourselves to their humble condition. “ Be not wise in your own conceits ;”—guard against entertaining any overweening opinion of your own wisdom, as, of itself, sufficient. “ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest,” or morally becoming, “ in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves ; but rather give place to wrath ;”—refer your cause to the judgment of God. “ For, it is written, vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.\* If, therefore your enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst give him drink ; for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” It

\* Deut. xxxii. 35.

is thus, that you are most likely to disarm him of his hostility, and to win his good will. “Be not overcome of evil;”—let not the provocations, or sufferings, which you endure, instigate you to evil, in causing you to have recourse to retaliation;—“but overcome evil with good.”

Obedience to these, and to similar divine precepts, inculcated, by the inspired apostle, is the only infallible evidence of the prevalence of pure and undefiled religion, in any community; and it is, when the heart of any individual christian is thoroughly influenced, and his life steadily guided, by them, and then only he can safely conclude, that he is in the way of eternal life. Unspeakably happy would it be for the christian church, in its temporal, as well as eternal, condition, were all men thoroughly and constantly actuated by the divine principles, and guided by the divine maxims, here taught. Then, indeed, might they, with reason, rejoice in the hope of glory; and, then, also, would those sorrows, unavoidably incident to the present state of probation, be exceedingly alleviated. But, alas! it is not so, with the church! It is far otherwise! It becomes every individual christian, then, to cherish every true christian principle, to cultivate every christian disposition, to yield unreserved obedience to the divine precepts of the gospel, that he may work out his own salvation, and that, so far as depends on him, true religion may increase, and to be constant in prayer, for a

more prosperous state of the christian world ;—for that promised period, when the wilderness shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom, as the rose.\*

It is by earnestly and diligently cherishing and cultivating the heavenly affections, which are here so pressingly recommended, and by yielding unreserved and persevering obedience to the divine precepts, which are here so strongly inculcated, that we shall present ourselves to God a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable ; and who can sufficiently estimate the force of the motives, which we have to do so ? Who can duly value “the mercies of God,” bestowed on us, by which the apostle urges us to offer this sacrifice ? If we have been delivered, from heathen darkness, to the marvellous light of the gospel ;—if we are no longer, as our Gentile fathers were, strangers and foreigners from the commonwealth of the people of God, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ;—if we have been brought from a state of being without God in the world, and of having no hope, beyond the limits of this short and suffering life, to the knowledge of the living and true God, and to the assured prospect of life and immortality ;—if this be love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his only-begotten Son, to be the propitiation for our sins ;—if we were redeemed, not with corruptible silver and

\* Isa. xxxv. 1.

gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot ;—if we, thus, obtained justification of life, freely by the grace of God ;—if God be our father, and we his children ;—if, in this state, all things, whether joyful or afflictive, work together, for our ultimate and eternal good and happiness ;—if the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory, now belong to us, as a clear christian privilege ;—if these things be so,—and who, that is versed in the divine oracles knows not, well, that they are,—then, have we, in those “ mercies of God,” motives,—the strongest possible motives,—to present ourselves to God, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, by carefully and constantly cultivating those heavenly dispositions, and by earnestly, diligently, and perseveringly, obeying those divine precepts.

It is of the greatest importance, that we should be impressed with a firm belief, that the sacrifice here mentioned by the apostle, is indeed acceptable to God. For, it is evident, that the more we are impressed with a sense of this, the more readily, cheerfully, and acceptably, shall we offer it ; and who shall offer himself a holy sacrifice to God, that does not believe, that the sacrifice will be accepted ? Where is the motive to present it a holy sacrifice ?

In virtue of our christian profession, we all offer ourselves a living sacrifice to God ; and it is necessary, that we should take the utmost care, that the

sacrifice may have those qualities, which render it acceptable. If it be, indeed, a holy sacrifice, it cannot fail to be accepted ; but, if it be not holy, it will as certainly be rejected. The sacrifice not only must be without external blemish, but it must also be free from internal unsoundness ; and we must ever remember, that he, to whom the sacrifice is offered, is a perfect and unerring judge of its real qualities. The most secret recesses of the heart, as well as our most public deeds, are perfectly known to him. “ For, the word of God,”—that is, God himself, considered in his omniscience and omnipotence,—is “ quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his sight ; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do.”\*

In the passage, which we have now been considering, the apostle, as we have seen, exhorts this church, in regard to the exercise of the miraculous gifts and powers, with which its teachers and rulers were divinely endowed. Why, it may be asked, by the unreflecting, have those supernatural gifts and powers been withdrawn from the church ; and why, especially, are they withheld from the teachers of the gospel ? These questions may easily be answered, in

\* Heb. iv. 12.

a very satisfactory manner. The great design of the miracles, of our Lord was, that they might undeniably attest his divine mission, his being the expected Messiah, and the truth of his doctrines. The purpose, which the miraculous gifts and powers, with which the apostles and other evangelists were endowed, was similar ;—they were the signs, or credentials, of their apostleship. The spiritual gifts and powers, which existed in the christian church, in the apostolic age, were the seal and earnest of their adoption, as the people of God, and of their having become heirs of eternal life ; and those gifts and powers, be it ever remembered, were the seal and earnest of the adoption and inheritance, not only of them, but also of the universal church of Christ, in all future ages. By means of those miraculous endowments, the great and glorious dispensation of the gospel soon obtained a firm and permanent footing in the world ; and, when the end was accomplished, God, who does nothing in vain, withdrew the means.

It was, indeed, impossible, that the miraculous gifts and powers, which so abundantly existed, in the church, in the apostolic age, should continue to exist in it. As a miracle is a deviation from the settled, regular, course of nature, or a suspension of its laws, it is evident, that either perpetuity, or frequency, in miracles, would overturn those laws, and would destroy the very nature, and, consequently, frus-



trate the design, of miracles. It is, indeed, quite clear, that a perpetual miracle is a contradiction in terms.

In the cessation and absence, then, of the primeval miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, in the church of Christ, we have no just cause of murmuring. On the contrary, we have the greatest reason to admire the wisdom of God, in ordering things, as they are, and to bless and adore him, for the inestimable spiritual advantages, which we enjoy. In the authentic history, which we have, in the written oracles of God, of the miracles, that accompanied the first establishment of the gospel dispensation, we have the clearest and most convincing proofs, that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, and that all his recorded doctrines are true. Of the divine mission of the apostles and other evangelists, and of the divine origin of what they taught and committed to writing, we have, from the same source, proofs equally clear and convincing; and, on the seals of adoption, and on the earnest of the inheritance of eternal life, granted to our fathers, in the church, we their children, or successors, are fully warranted to rely, with confidence equally strong with that, which fortified and cheered their breasts.

It were well, that we ever carefully bore in mind, how incomparably more valuable and important, in the judgment of the inspired apostle, who himself

was so richly endowed with supernatural gifts and powers, the ordinary christian virtues are than even the greatest measures of such powers. "Though," said he, "I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity I am nothing."\* Were the christian world duly impressed with a sense of these things, the number of deceivers and deceived, by fancied divine revelations and miraculous powers, would, exceedingly to the advantage of the church, be greatly diminished.

The stated ministers of religion cannot, with reason, complain of any want of means, either of informing themselves, or of instructing their flocks, in saving knowledge. It is, indeed, true, that, if the inspired apostles and evangelists could not boast of the possession, either of the means, or of the knowledge, of salvation, as of themselves, still less can we, the ordinary, uninspired, ministers of the gospel, boast of any such thing. But, blessed be our gracious God! we have, what is fully sufficient for this infinitely important purpose, in the divine written oracles, which contain all the treasures of heavenly wisdom and knowledge. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God,"—that is, the minister of religion,—“ may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”\* From this invaluable and inexhaustible mine, and from this alone, must “ the man of God ” draw the means of salvation and eternal life, for himself and for those, who are committed to his charge. The divine oracles he must examine and study closely and constantly ; and he must examine and study them in those languages, which the Holy Spirit has used and honoured as the depositaries of “ the words of eternal life.” For, in those languages they possess a perfection and an unction, which can be wholly transferred to no other language. He must examine and study the Holy Scriptures, in all sincerity, and with all candour, and carefully avoid perverting their meaning either to serve his own worldly interests, or to favour the views of any church, sect, or party. As a faithful steward of the revealed mysteries of God, his chief and constant aim and care must be, to know and to declare the truth as it is in Jesus, and to promote order, peace, and pure and undefiled religion. All his talents, and all his acquirements, he must directly and indirectly consecrate to the service of the divine, chief, shepherd, who, if he do so, will most amply reward him.

\* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

## LECTURE XIV.

## ROMANS, XIII. 1—7.

IMPORTANT considerations rendered the exhortation of the apostle, in this passage, relative to obedience to civil government, necessary. The christians were calumniated, as hostile to the emperor, and to the laws. The Jews could never thoroughly bring themselves to think, they could justly, even in a civil sense, be, in any country, in subjection to the Gentile powers. Although, when invested with authority, and placed in stations of important trust, individuals of that nation discharged the duties of their office, in the most faithful and efficient manner, yet, as subjects of foreign powers, they were, about this period, exceedingly prone to seditious practices, and, in fact, had, not long before the date of this epistle, for such practices, been, by an imperial edict, banished, in a body, from Rome. The Jewish converts to christianity might still have retained views and feelings, relative to Gentile civil government, which had such inveterate possession of them ; and the Gentile part of the church, likewise, might have been in danger


of adopting those views and feelings. The less informed, in the church, might not have been wholly free from that general and fondly cherished notion, that the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a temporal one ; and such persons might have been in danger of being misled, even by the very titles given, in the Holy Scriptures, to the Messiah, as the great and glorious head of the church, and by the sublime figurative description, contained in those oracles, of his reign, and be induced to think, that they owed allegiance of any kind only to him. These considerations manifestly rendered it necessary, that the apostle should give to the church at Rome the exhortation, which he here gives. “ Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.”

The all-wise and good providence of God extends to all the nations of the earth ; and he rules over them, in that manner, which is suitable to their rational and accountable nature, and to the circumstances, in which they are respectively placed. The dictates of reason clearly lead us to this conclusion ; and the divine oracles, although they declare, that, in punishment for its wilful blindness to the existence and glorious attributes of the living and true God, he has, by withholding from the Gentile world those special religious privileges, which he has seen fit to grant to others, delivered them over to their own blindness, and consequent great, moral, depravity, everywhere expressly teach, that, in his ordinary pro-


vidence, he ever rules over all the nations of mankind. Those oracles are, not only careful to remind us, that it is the God of all the earth, who graciously gives to all its inhabitants fruitful seasons, and fills their hearts with food and gladness, and watches over all that concerns them, but, also, expressly declare, that the privation, experienced, by the Gentile world, of those special spiritual privileges, with which the church of God is blessed, are intended for their moral discipline, and for qualifying them, also, for being, at a future happy period, universally put in possession of those privileges.

Since, then, both reason and revelation agree in declaring, that the omnipotent, all-wise, and good, providence of God embraces all the nations of the earth, it necessarily and clearly follows, that the civil authorities and powers, by which human communities are governed constitute a part of that providence ; and, accordingly, when we duly consider this, we are quite prepared for the declaration, which the apostle adds to the exhortation to the christian, even when he is a subject of a heathen power. “ For, there is no power but from God. The powers, that be, are ordained of God.” The authority, with which the civil magistrate is invested, and the power, which he possesses, are derived from God, and are sanctioned by him.

In considering the exhortation of the apostle, it is necessary, that we should clearly understand its pre-



cise nature and extent. It is quite evident, that, in his exhortation, he refers, not to any particular form of civil government, but to the source and nature of civil authority and power, in general, and to those laws, which, under any form of government, are enacted, for the prevention of crime, vice, violence, and injustice, for the punishment of those, who commit such things, and for the encouragement of the virtuous, the good, and the peaceable. The apostle inculcates on the christian, that, as a christian, his principles and profession are so far from freeing him from his obligation to obedience to the civil laws of the community, in which he lives,—even when that community is not christian,—that, on the contrary. they bind him still more to obedience to those laws, But, it is equally evident, that neither this exhortation of the apostle, nor any other part of the sacred volume, either deprives the christian of any civil right, that belongs to his fellow-subjects, or prevents him from asserting, when that is necessary, any of his civil rights. Nay, it is certain and clear, that the christian, like the rest of his fellow-citizens, is, not only permitted, but even placed under a strong moral obligation, to use his influence, to have defective laws improved, and bad and unwise ones abolished. Here, too, it must be added, that it is very evident, the apostle has, in his exhortation, no reference to spiritual dominion. This dominion clearly and unquestionably belongs only to God ; and, if it



be true, that the minister of religion has, in virtue of his office, no right to the assumption and exercise of civil power, and, if it be true,—and who can deny it?—that the possession and exercise of that power, by the minister of religion, have been greatly abused, and have been exceedingly injurious to mankind, it is equally true, that the civil magistrate has no right to the assumption of spiritual dominion over the subject, and that whenever it has been assumed and exercised, by him, the power has been, neither less abused, nor less injurious, than it has been, in the converse case. For, both cases are, in their nature, virtually the same; and, accordingly, in their effects, equally injurious.

Having exhorted all the members of the church, in Rome, and, with them, all other christians, to yield obedience to the civil authorities, although those authorities were heathen, and having affirmed, that the source of civil power is divine, he points out the very powerful motives, both spiritual and temporal, there are, to urge every christian, to be obedient to those authorities. “Whoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they, that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation,” or punishment. “For, rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that, which is good, and thou shalt have praise,” or a reward, “of the same. For, he is the minister of God for good to thee.



But, if thou doest that, which is evil, be afraid. For, he beareth not the sword in vain. For, he is the minister of good, to execute wrath," or punishment, "on him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath,"—not only to avoid present punishment,—“but also for conscience sake.”

This passage, of itself, fully and clearly shows, that civil authorities and powers have the divine sanction, and that christians have the most powerful motives, both spiritual and temporal, to render obedience to those authorities. But, to the serious and well-disposed christian it will not be displeasing, to be reminded, how this apostle speaks, and how another inspired apostle discourses, in other passages, on the same important subject. Our apostle writes to Titus, who had the spiritual charge of christian churches, that, in regard to the civil authorities, were situated similarly to the church at Rome, thus; “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates; to be ready to every good work; to speak evil of no man; to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men;”\* and to Timothy, under similar circumstances, he writes;—“I exhort, that, first of all, supplications and prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;—for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For, this is

\* Titus, iii. 1, 2.

good and acceptable, in the sight of God, our saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”\* The apostle Peter, in perfect accordance, in all respects, with the other, writes to all christians, in whatever country they may be, in these plain and impressive terms. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake ; whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as to them, who are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of,” or for rewarding, “them, that do well.”†

Since, then, from the very nature of human society, there must, in all communities, be civil authorities and powers, to maintain order, to dispense justice, and to enforce the laws, and since, likewise, there must, in all communities, be an order of men appointed, and duly trained, to protect them from external violence and aggression, it necessarily follows, that the state must make a suitable pecuniary provision, for the maintenance of those, who discharge those duties ; and, to this maintenance, it is evident, individual members of communities must contribute their share. In this passage, accordingly, the apostle declares, that the levying of tribute and custom, for the maintenance of the authorities and powers of states, has the same divine sanction, which those authorities and powers themselves have, and that the functionaries, who are appointed to receive that tribute and

\* 1 Tim. ii. 1—4.

† 1 Pet. ii. 13—14.

custom, are the servants, not merely of the state, but of God himself. “For this cause, pay ye tribute also. For, they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues ;—tribute, to whom tribute is due ;—custom, to whom custom ; fear, to whom fear ; honour, to whom honour.”

It may, with propriety, be here observed, that all evasions, by individual members of any community, of the tribute, or custom, imposed by the laws of the state, are as unavailing, and even injurious, as they are unlawful, and contrary to the divine will and appointment. For, it is evident, that evasions of the laws of the revenue, from the deficiencies, which they create, and from the necessity, which they occasion of multiplying the number of those, who are appointed to realize it, unavoidably occasion an increase in the amount levied from individual members of the community. Nor should we forget, that, in reference to this subject, our Lord himself has commanded, that we should render unto Cæsar, that which is Cæsar’s ;—that we should pay to the civil magistrate that tribute, which is his due.

The apostle well knew, that this epistle would, very probably, or rather certainly, be perused by the civil authorities ; and we cannot sufficiently admire the manner, in which he points out to them, also, the important duties of their office. Those authorities were too full of the pride of office to receive from any

teacher of the yet comparatively small, and despised, sect of the christians, any instruction, or exhortation, addressed to them directly. His instruction and exhortation, therefore, the apostle gives, in the most inoffensive, yet legitimate, and accordingly most effectual, way possible. For, he shows the civil magistrate his duties, and inculcates on him the faithful and just discharge of them, only by siding with him, and by pointing out to the governed their duties, and showing them the very strong obligations, which bound them to obey the civil authorities and powers.

From an attentive perusal, too, of this epistle, we must see, that, in reminding the civil magistrate of his duties, the apostle, who always writes very comprehensively, indirectly, but strongly, claims from him protection and encouragement for the christians, as men, whose religion is true and divine, calculated, in the highest degree, to promote the best interests of any community, and worthy of being eagerly and joyfully embraced, by all mankind.

The doctrine of the apostle, in this passage, is exceedingly calculated to raise those, who, in any community, are invested with civil authority, or power, very high, in the estimation of all its members. In preventing anarchy and confusion, in protecting the weak and defenceless, from violence, in preventing fraud and injustice, in punishing the guilty and the disorderly, in establishing and maintaining order, in asserting the rights of the fatherless,

the widow, and the helpless, in dispensing justice, with impartiality, to all, in encouraging and rewarding the meritorious, they have the high honour of co-operating with God himself, the supreme Author of all order and good. Besides, the consideration, that they derive their authority and power from the glorious ruler of the universe is well fitted to enable and to urge them to discharge their respective duties, with courage, firmness, diligence, and impartiality ; and, when they do so, it cannot fail to secure to them, in the present life, the inestimable possession of an approving conscience, and in the state to come, a rich, glorious, and eternal reward.

But, if, when they discharge the duties of their office faithfully and rightly, those, whom the divine providence has invested with authority and power, so greatly promote the good and the happiness of communities, if their office is so honourable, and if they are so richly rewarded, assuredly, on the contrary, there cannot, in any community, exist a greater evil than corrupt authorities, and tyrannical and oppressive powers ; nor is there any denomination of men, against whom the divine displeasure and signal punishment are so frequently, or so awfully, denounced. In any christian community, therefore, it is the right, the wisdom, and the duty, of its members to use every legitimate means, to make those, whom the divine providence has invested with authority and power, to answer the ends, for which they are ap-

pointed ;—to make them, indeed, the ministers of God to their fellow-men, not for evil, but for good. Nor is there in the doctrine of the apostle, in this passage, any thing, that divests the members of any community of this right, or any thing in his exhortation, that dissuades them from the most diligent and strenuous exercise of it.

But, although the word of God permits, or rather sanctions, the right, which the members of communities have, of being ruled, only by authorities and powers, that answer their end, and although the history of all nations does but too clearly show the unutterable evils, which have been caused, by despotic power, and the necessity, accordingly, of subjecting the exercise of all political authority and power to the restraints of wise and salutary laws, the christian must ever bear in mind the evil effects of political contentions and party-spirit on the heart and mind, and that, however earnestly and firmly he may think it necessary to assert, or to defend, his political liberty and rights, he must ever be careful to assert and defend them with moderation, forbearance, and charity. Here, we have no continuing city; we look for one to come! Our hearts and minds must be chiefly occupied, not with the concerns of this transitory world, but with the acquisition of that glorious and eternal liberty, which awaits the children of God, in the state to come!

## LECTURE XV.

## ROMANS, XIII. 8—14.

IN the context, the apostle has exhorted christians, to “render to all their dues;” and, preparatory to another injunction of vital importance, he here, in substance, repeats that exhortation. “Owe no man any thing; but to love one another;”—words, which evidently mean this;—let your love to each other be so great, fervent, and constant, that, in this respect, every one of you may be continually making his brother a debtor.

To enforce his exhortation, the apostle declares the perfect moral efficiency of mutual love, among christians. “For he, that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law.” He then, proceeds to show, how perfect mutual love, among christians, would secure perfect obedience to all the divine precepts, which relate to our conduct towards them. All these precepts, he observes, are virtually comprehended in that great fundamental commandment, which enjoins us to love our neighbour, as ourselves. “For this”—these commandments,—“Thou shalt not commit

adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and, if there be any other commandment,"—all other commandments, relative to our duty towards our neighbour,—“are briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, as thyself.”

“Love,” continues the apostle, “worketh no ill to his neighbour.” He, who loves his neighbour, as himself, will not commit any evil deed whatever against him. Adultery, and all its kindred sins, however speciously it may, sometimes, seem otherwise, proceed, not from genuine love, or good will, but from the grossest selfishness; and he, who truly loves his neighbour cannot commit sins, which bring on the victims a train of such great evils, temporal and eternal, as naturally follows them; and who needs to be informed, that murder, lawless violence, cruelty, and oppression, that theft and all manner of dishonesty, that false testimony, and every kind of falsehood and calumny, that covetousness, avarice, envy, and rapacity, that, indeed, all manner of conduct, which constitutes a breach of any divine moral precept, relative to our neighbour, is wholly inconsistent with love towards him? “Therefore,” adds the apostle, “love is the fulfilling of the law.” When we love our neighbour, as ourselves, it irresistibly constrains us to obey those divine command-



ments, which forbid us to do that, which is in any respect, injurious to him.

The obedience, to which the apostle here refers, we may observe, is of a negative nature. He affirms, that, if we love our neighbour, as ourselves, our love will restrain us from doing to him any manner of evil. But, undoubtedly, there must be more than this implied in the affirmation. His words must, also, imply, that, if we, indeed, love our neighbour as ourselves, our love will constrain us to do to them all the positive good, that may be in our power ;—that it will constrain us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to remove, or alleviate, the distress of the suffering, to minister, as effectually as we can, to all the wants, whether spiritual or temporal, of our neighbour, and, as much as possible, to promote his happiness.

If any one put the question of the Scribe,—“ But who is my neighbour ?”—he has the answer, given to that question, by an infallible authority. Our divine Lord, in the incomparably beautiful, and thoroughly convincing, allegory of the good Samaritan, shows, that, any man of any nation, however hostile to us, is, in a moral sense, our neighbour.

The motives, which we have, to cherish, in our hearts, love towards our neighbour, are exceedingly powerful. While to cherish malice towards him, is to foster, in our bosoms, a viper, whose stings we

must ourselves ever endure, benevolence towards him begets, in our hearts and minds a calm, tranquillity, and self-approbation, which forms a great and essential part of our present happiness, secures to us the approbation of God, our heavenly Father, and brings us into the closest spiritual union with him. “For love is of God; and every one, that loveth is born of God.”\* “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”† Nor is it in this state only that love constitutes human happiness; we know, that it will do so in that, which is to come. For, different from all other christian virtues, it will “never fail.”

Let not the christian ever forget the necessity of cherishing, in his heart, love towards his neighbour, or how unavailing all other acquirements and qualifications are, without it. Without love, we are assured, not all the numerous gifts and powers, that distinguished the apostles and other evangelists themselves, could, in any degree, avail us. “Though,” said the great and highly gifted apostle of the Gentiles, “I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing; and though I bestow all my goods to feed

\* 1 John iv. 7.

† 1 John iv. 16.

the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”\*

But, if it be, thus, necessary for the christian to be mindful of the necessity of loving his neighbour, as himself, and of the evil effects of not loving him, still more necessary, if possible, is it that he should be mindful of the evil consequences of positive hatred towards him. Whoever bears malice against his brother, we are assured, derives no benefit from the glorious light of the gospel. For “ he that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now,”† “ and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth ; because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.”‡ Neither does he observe the great cardinal commandment of loving God. “ For, if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?”§ Nor, if he change not, can he reasonably expect any thing, but final, signal, punishment. For “ he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer ; and we know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”||

Since, then, the effects of loving our neighbour are so exceedingly great and beneficial, and the consequences of not loving, and especially of positively

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 3.

† 1 John, ii. 9.

‡ 1 John, ii. 11.

§ 1 John, iv. 20.

|| 1 John, 14, 15.

hating, him, are so fearfully injurious, it is evident, that we should know, and diligently use, the means of cultivating, in our hearts, love towards him, and of rooting out of our bosoms, all malice against him. Here, however, we can advert to those means but very briefly. It is of one blood that God created all men, to dwell on the face of the earth; and, thus, the human race constitute one general family,—great, indeed, and numerous,—but still one and the same. Besides this general, but powerful consideration, the christian has another, and still more powerful, cause, the due contemplation of which is exceedingly calculated to kindle, in his bosom, the love of his neighbour. God so marvellously loved us as to give up his only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, as a ransom for all,—to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world,—that, death being abolished, we might have justification of life, freely by his grace,—that we might become heirs of eternal life. Who, then, can measure,—who can conceive,—the love, which this is calculated to beget in our hearts towards God, our unspeakably gracious heavenly Father? But, if we have, thus, so powerful a cause to love the Father, who has begotten us again to prospects too ineffably great and glorious, does not that cause, also, constrain us to love all those, whom our common Father has begotten to the same prospects, and whom he has, thus, made our spiritual brethren;—brethren, in a

sense incomparably higher and more important than that, in which we are constituted such, by our natural common origin, and our consanguinity? Are we not taught of God, by his marvellous love towards us, to love one another?

There is still another similar circumstance, the consideration of which is equally powerful to kindle, in our bosoms, mutual love. That circumstance is our spiritual relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to one another, in him. He is our divine spiritual head, and we constitute the individual members of his body; and what could more powerfully constrain us to mutual love and beneficence than the consideration of this close union with the Son of God, and with one another?

It is of unspeakable importance, that we should be sensible of the necessity of cherishing in our hearts mutual love, and of knowing and using the means of kindling it in us. For, although its prevalence among christians be of the most vital consequence, there is nothing more true, or, to the intelligent observer, more manifest, than that, not only, from the moral evils, which abound in christian communities, but also from the defective knowledge of many of the divine grace and impartiality towards mankind, so clearly revealed, in the Holy Scriptures, and the deplorable divisions, which interest and ignorance create, there exists, alas! among professing christians but little mutual love.

Having, now, exhorted the church at Rome, relative to various important duties, the apostle still farther enforces his exhortation, by reminding them of the shortness of the time, that was to bring them to the possession of the eternal life and happiness, which they had in prospect. The state of the Roman christians, while yet Gentiles, was a state of spiritual insensibility, or sleep, and, from inveterate habit, some of them, even yet, were apt to slumber ; and to this infirmity we have a clear allusion, in the apostolic exhortation. “ And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep. For, now is our salvation, nearer, than when we believed.”

The state of religious ignorance and moral corruption, in which the Gentile world lay, before the Sun of Righteousness arose on it, is, in the language of Scripture, aptly called *darkness* ; and, with equal propriety, the christian state, which restores us to the knowledge of true religion, and to sanctification, is denominated *light*. Hence it follows, that even in the christian state, in proportion to our remaining ignorance, or corruption, we may be truly said, to be yet in darkness. Besides, since, in the midst of the greatest degree of light, which we can now enjoy, we still know only in part, it is evident, that it is only in our future state, we can be said to enjoy the full and perfect light of day ; and, that we may be sensible of the full force of the words of the apostle, in this passage, we should not only attend to this,

but also observe, that he appears to compare our present state of probation, in which our sky is so often clouded, gloomy, lowering, and stormy, and in which exist so many fears, and uncertainties, and dangers, and sufferings, and deaths, to the *night*, and our future state of salvation, glory, and felicity, to the *day*. “Now is our salvation nearer, than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand.”

Oh! that we were all inclined, qualified, and able, to hail, with joy, the approaching day of salvation, eternal life, and glory! When, in this world, after a night of darkness, storm, and terror, the morning star, in placid brightness and beauty, announces the certain and near approach of day, our hearts glow, with hope and delight, and, when the mighty orb of the sun, in majesty and glory, arises, to shed his flood of heavenly light, on our earth, and to confer his manifold benefits on its inhabitants, we are inspired with joy much greater. But, with incomparably better hope, and greater delight, does the breast of the true christian glow, at the appearance of the day-star, which now ushers in the eternal day of salvation; and with infinitely greater joy will his bosom be filled, when that day itself, in splendour ineffable, shall burst upon his view;—that day, in which the glory of God himself shall shine upon him, never more to set, and constitute his happiness.

Alas! that, notwithstanding the manifold and

most express assurances of the divine oracles, there should be so many, who, from a disbelief, that God does, indeed, will, that they themselves should inherit eternal life, are unable to hail, with any measure of joy, the approaching day of salvation! Alas! that the minds and hearts of so many thousands, engrossed by the things of this transitory world, should be so entirely diverted from so great salvation! Alas! that such multitudes should prefer the sinful pleasures of this uncertain and evanescent life to the unspeakably greater and eternal felicity, which the rapidly approaching day of salvation brings to every faithful and obedient christian! Alas! that, in christian communities, there should be some, either so ignorant,—nay wilfully ignorant,—or so blinded by their prejudices, or the love of their sins, as to disbelieve, that any such salvation is to come, at all! Alas! that so many millions of our fellow-men should, from the want of true philanthropy, in professing christians, from the little value that christians put upon their own religious advantages, from their consequent remissness, in extending the knowledge of the salvation of God to those, who yet sit in darkness, from the unwise, and therefore ineffectual, means too often adopted, when they have endeavoured to extend that knowledge, and from the prejudices, which the irreligious and immoral lives of professing christians themselves create in the minds of those of the Gentiles, with whom they mix ;—alas!



that, from these and other similar causes, so many millions of our fellow men, should, after the lapse of so many ages of the gospel dispensation, be still wholly ignorant of the great, glorious, and joyful salvation of God, by Jesus Christ, our Lord !

In a spiritual and moral sense, christians, while yet in this state, “ are the children of the light, and the children of the day,” “ and not,” as our heathen fathers were, “ of the night, nor of darkness ;” and we are, therefore, earnestly and constantly exhorted to “ walk,” or live, “ as the children of light.” In this passage, accordingly, in which the apostle, to render his exhortation as inoffensive as possible, and because he was the special apostle of the Gentiles, ranks himself, as a member of the Gentile christian church, we find him admonishing the Roman christians, thus ; “ Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness ; and let us put on the armour,” or garments, “ of light. Let us walk decently, as in the day ;—not in chambering and wantonness ;—not in strife and hatred. But, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Let the same mind and affections be in you, that were in your divine Lord ; and follow that perfect and bright example of moral purity, which he has left you, to imitate. “ Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Let not your hearts be set on the acquisition of wealth, for the purpose of consuming it on your sinful lusts. Thus, also, does the apostle exhort the Thessalo-

nians, and, with them, all other christians. “ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep,” that is, sin, “ as others ” —as do the Gentiles ; “ but, let us watch and be sober ;”—let us lead a vigilant life of piety and sanctity. “ For they, that sleep, sleep in the night ; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But, let us, who are of the day be sober ; putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For, God hath not appointed us to wrath,” or punishment, “ but to obtain salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ.”\*

\* Rom. v. 5—9.

## LECTURE XVI.

## ROMANS, XIV. XV. 1—13.

IN bringing men to the light of the gospel, and in imparting to them its benefits, the all-wise God ever acts towards them as rational and accountable creatures. In the commencement of that dispensation, it was evidently necessary, that it should be clearly proved to every unbiassed mind, that that dispensation was, indeed, from God, by the evidence of unquestionable miracles. But, even at that early period, no miraculous, or physical, force operated immediately on the minds of men, to compel them, either to believe, or to assent. Their belief and acceptance of the gospel were the effect of incontrovertible evidence, and strong motives ;—the only means suitable to rational and accountable beings, in a state of probation. When we duly consider this, we cannot reasonably wonder, that, even in apostolic times, from former habits and opinions, the faith of many converts should be defective, and that their minds should still retain many prejudices and errors.

It was especially to be expected, that the Jews,

whose rites and customs, were of divine origin, should, even after their conversion, still retain strong prejudices, in favour of those rites and customs, although they were to be for ever abolished, by that divine dispensation; and, in the portion of the epistle, which we are now to consider, accordingly, we find ample proofs of the existence of those prejudices, in the Jewish converts to the gospel, who must have formed a large proportion of the church at Rome.

The circumstances of the Gentile converts were different. Their former religion was so utterly unreasonable and false, and so grossly corrupting, that the truths of revelation easily proved them to be so. The objects of their former superstition were spectres so monstrously chimerical, that the glorious light of the gospel banished them out of their minds, as soon as it was admitted. But, the very facility, with which the Gentile convert renounced his own superstition and errors made him less tolerant of the remaining prejudices and imperfections of the Jewish believer in Christ; and, in many instances, while the Jewish christian regarded his Gentile brother, in the Lord, as acting profanely, in wholly disregarding the Mosaic ritual, the Gentile often looked on the Jewish believer, as a bigot, for still clinging to positive and temporary customs, which were divinely destined to terminate in the commencement of the dispensation of the gospel.

These differences in the views and feelings of the members of the church at Rome, if allowed to remain, would necessarily be followed by very evil consequences ; and they, therefore, urgently required that apostolic admonition and correction, which we here amply find, in their most instructive and interesting form. “ Him, that is weak in the faith, receive ye ; but not to doubtful disputations.” Receive your christian brother, though deficient in his faith, as truly a brother, in the Lord ; and harass him not, with disputes about things unimportant. “ For one,”—the Gentile convert,—“ believeth, that he may eat all things ; another,”—the Jewish christian,—“ who is weak, eateth herbs,” only. Daniel, while living in the heathen city, Babylon, abstained from the use of all kinds of flesh, and ate only vegetable food ; to avoid pollution ; and Josephus informs us, that certain priests, sent by Felix, as prisoners, to Rome, did the same ; and for the same reason. This was the manner of living, which the christian Jews, here mentioned, who had not yet fully understood their christian liberty, adopted ; while the Gentile christian, who had been taught, that no such abstinence was required, by the gospel, used, without scruple, all kinds of good animal food. He, then, who thus freely used animal food, despised him, who abstained from it, as a bigot ; and, on the other hand, he, who abstained, regarded him, who did not, as a polluted man, with whom he could

conscientiously hold no free, religious, intercourse. Here, therefore, the apostle interposes his authority, and exhorts both parties to refrain from such unbrotherly and unchristian dispositions. "Let not him, that eateth, despise him, that eateth not; and let not him, who eateth not, judge," or condemn, "him, that eateth."

The apostle grounded his exhortation, to the Jewish christian to refrain from such unfavourable opinions, and from harbouring such an uncharitable disposition towards his Gentile christian brother, on the strongest possible reason. "For," saith the apostle, "God hath received him." The Gentiles, who believed in Christ, as the Son of God, received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as the sign and seal of their reception into the church, and their adoption, as the children of God, as well as the Jews, who received him, as their Messiah; and there could, therefore, be no reasonable doubt, that the one, as well as the other, became real members of the church and household of God. Since, then, the Gentile christian had, thus, become the acknowledged servant of God, or Christ, the Jewish believer had evidently no right to pass any unfavourable judgment on him. "Who art thou," adds the apostle, "that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth, or falleth." But, the Jewish christian is not only, informed, that he was

blamable, in cherishing an uncharitable disposition towards his Gentile brother, but is, also, authoritatively told, that, notwithstanding the free and indiscriminate use, which that brother made of the food, which was so offensive to him, God, his heavenly master, would certainly own him, as a true and faithful servant. “Yea; he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand,”—there being no real cause of rejection found in him.

In another point, too, the Jewish differed from the Gentile christian. “One man,”—the Jewish believer,—“esteemeth one day,”—as sacred,—“above another; another,”—the Gentile convert,—“esteemeth every day alike. Let every man,”—continues the apostle,—“be fully persuaded, in his own mind.” Let every one be convinced, in his own mind, of the necessity, or the reverse, of making such a distinction, in days; and let him act according to his conviction. This, the apostle observes, would meet with the divine approbation; and he shows how it would do so. “He, that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord;”—in the belief, that the Lord still requires the distinction;—“and he, that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it;”—convinced, that the Lord has set him free from the obligation of making any distinction, in days. So also, “He, that eateth,” all kinds of good food indiscriminately, “eateth to the Lord; for he giveth

God thanks," for his free bounty ; " and he, that eateth not," animal food, " to the Lord, he eateth not, yet giveth God thanks," even for the simple, but sufficient, fare, of which he makes use.

To these particulars, the apostle adds other general, and most cogent, reasons, which ought to make all professing Christians to refrain from passing mutual harsh judgments, and from harbouring an uncharitable disposition towards one another. "For," saith he, "none of us liveth to himself; and no man dieth to himself. For, whether we live, we live to the Lord; and, whether we die, we die to the Lord. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For, to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Thus, the absolute sovereignty of Christ over us, in whatever state we may be, not only forms a motive, for us to devote ourselves unreservedly to his service, but is, also, a cause, to make us refrain from arrogating to ourselves the right to pass any unfavourable judgment on another.

But, there is still another motive, in itself, of unspeakable force, to make all christians refrain, both from passing harsh judgments on each other, and from regarding one another with contempt; and the apostle fails not to make use of it. "But, why dost thou judge thy brother? Or, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For, we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For, it is written, As




I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me; and every tongue shall confess to God.\* So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Were christians duly impressed with this most solemn consideration, instead of indulging, as alas! they but too often do, in uncharitable judgments, and severe censures, against their christian fellow-servants, and in mutual contempt, they would, with all seriousness, care, and diligence, attend to their own hearts and lives, that they might be prepared to render their final account to their supreme, divine, Lord and judge, with advantage.

The apostle, now, proceeds to show, that although, by the gospel, all legal, positive, distinctions, in food, are abolished, it was clearly the duty of the Gentile christian to refrain from unnecessarily using those articles of food, which, in the use of them, were calculated to injure his Jewish fellow-christian. For, while the Gentile christian used, without scruple, those articles of food, which the Jewish brother still regarded as unclean, and divinely forbidden, this brother was either alienated, in his heart, from his fellow-christian, or induced, against his conscience, to follow his example, or tempted wholly to renounce the gospel. "Let us not, therefore, judge one another, any more, but judge," or purpose, "this rather; that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and

\* Isa. xlv. 23.

am persuaded, by the Lord Jesus,"—by immediate revelation from Christ,—“that there is nothing,”—no kind of food,—“unclean, in itself, but, to him, that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean;” since, if he use it, he must do so, with a disapproving conscience. “But, if thy brother be grieved,” or injured, “with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died;” either by inducing him to eat against his conscience, or by causing him altogether to renounce the gospel.

“Let not, then,” continues the apostle, “your good be evil spoken of;” by any denomination of men; from any indiscretion, or want of self-denial, on your part, or from any deficiency, in tenderness, towards your brethren, in Christ. “For, the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.” The kingdom of God essentially consists not in the use of meat and drink, but in the practice of whatever is holy, just, and good, in mutual peace, among its subjects, and in the joy arising from the gifts and benefits imparted by the Holy Spirit. “For, he that, in these things, serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us, therefore, follow the things, which make for peace, and things, where-with one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God.” “For, we are his workmanship,



created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”\* “All things,”—all kinds of food, in themselves good, “are pure ; but, it is evil for that man, who eateth with offence. It is good, neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother is offended, or is made weak. Thou hast faith,”—thou hast a belief, that the gospel makes no distinction, in the use of different kinds of food. “Have it to thyself;”—have it, as it regards thyself.—“Happy is he, that condemneth not himself, in that, which he alloweth.” Happy is he, who, though convinced, that all distinctions of food are, now, abolished, yet uses not his liberty, to the injury of his fellow-christian. “But, he, that doubteth is condemned, if he eat ; because he eateth not of faith. For, whatever is not of faith is sin.” Whatever a man does, with the belief, that it is wrong, is sin. “We, then, who are strong,”—who are well and fully instructed, in our christian liberty,—“ought to bear the infirmities of the weak,”—of the less informed ; by refraining, in this, and similar cases, from using our liberty, and, thus, charitably indulging them,—“and not to please ourselves,” by using it. “Let every one of us,” in things of this nature, “please his neighbour, for his good, to edification.”

Here, the apostle enforces his exhortation, by drawing their attention to the perfect, bright, and

\* Eph. ii. 10.

persuasive, example, of the Lord Jesus himself. As typified by David, the king, and prophetically described, in his lays, our Lord, not only exercised self-denial and patience, and forbearance towards men, in their weaknesses and prejudices, but endured the greatest, although unmerited, reproaches, in doing the will of God, and in promoting the best, and eternal, interests of men. "For, even Christ," saith he, "pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them, that reproached thee, fell on me." Then, the apostle embraces the opportunity, to remind the Roman brethren, especially the Gentile part of them, of the important design and use of the Holy Scriptures. "For, whatsoever things were written, aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." And to this he adds a prayer to God, which, if sincerely, fervently, and frequently, put up, by all christians, for themselves and others, could not fail to make the christian church, in unanimity and good will, very different from what it is. "Now, the God of patience and consolation,"—the God, who exercises such wonderful patience towards us, and who is the author of all consolation,—“give you to be likeminded, one toward another,”—grant you unanimity and mutual benevolence,—“according to Christ Jesus;”—in conformity to the will and example of Christ, our Lord. “That ye may, with

one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Once more, the apostle repeats his earnest exhortation to both the Jewish and Gentile members of this church, to maintain unanimity, and to cherish mutual love, from the consideration, that God, through Christ, had manifestly received both of them, without distinction, into the inheritance of the glory, prepared for his people, in the state to come. "Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." On the one hand, to raise the Jewish part of the church, in the esteem of the Gentile members, and to urge them to the unanimity and mutual love, which he inculcates, the apostle emphatically reminds these, that our Lord was primarily and specially sent to the Jews, to establish the truth and faithfulness of God, by the fulfilment of the promises, made to the patriarchs of that highly favoured people, relative to the Messiah and the great blessings of his kingdom. "Now, I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision," or Jews, "on account of the truth of God, to confirm the promises, made unto the Fathers." On the other hand, to remove all manner of prejudice, from the minds of the Jewish believers, against their Gentile brethren, and to win their good will towards them, he affirms, that the design of the mission of the Messiah was to extend to the Gentiles, also, the great benefits of his

kingdom, and, thus, to give them, likewise, cause to bless God, for those benefits ; and he proves his affirmation, in the manner most of all calculated to produce conviction in the mind of a candid Jew,—by showing, how clearly the extension of the benefits of the kingdom of the Messiah to the Gentiles is predicted in the Scriptures. “ And that the Gentiles might glorify God, for his mercy ; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee,” or praise thee, “ among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.\* And again he,”—that is, the inspired royal psalmist, —“ saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.† And again, praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ; and laud him, all ye people.‡ And again, Isaias saith, there shall be a root of Jesse, and he, that shall rise, to reign over the Gentiles ; in him shall the Gentiles trust.§ Now,” ejaculates the apostle, “ the God of hope fill you, with all joy and peace, in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost !”

The portion of the epistle, which we have now considered, is full of instruction and use, in all parts and periods of the christian church. In the clearest manner, it shows, that those distinctions, which some christians still make, in the use of food, are wholly unwarranted, by the divine oracles ; and, in this, it entirely agrees with what we read in other parts of

\* Psalm, xviii. 49.

† Psalm, lxiv. 4.

‡ Psalm, cxvii. 1.

§ Isaiah, xi. 10.

the writings of this inspired apostle of the Gentiles. But, at the same time, it as clearly shows us, that towards those of our christian brethren, whose faith is, thus, imperfect we are bound to conduct ourselves, not only without any alienation of heart or mind, but with all manner of forbearance and tenderness.

This portion, too, instructs us, as to the merits of the question of the distinction of *days*, still observed, in the christian church, and as to the manner, in which christians ought to conduct themselves towards their fellow-christians, whose opinions, on the subject, differ from their own. Omitting, as unimportant, the distinction, made between one day and any other, we will now advert only to that, which is made, in the observance of the Sabbath-day. In this passage, the apostle does not affirm, that the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of cessation from all manner of labour, and secular employment, is binding on the christian church; and his other writings lead us to no other conclusion, than that the observance of it is not required of them. He remonstrates with the Gentile christian churches of the province of Galatia, who, at the instigation of the judaizing teachers, were in imminent danger of being brought under the yoke of the Mosaic ritual, in these words. “Ye observe *days*, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain.”\* And, in similar

\* Gal. iv. 10, 11.

words, he admonishes the Colossians, who, from the same cause, were in the same danger. "Let no man judge you, in meat, or drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new-moon, or of the Sabbath-days, which are a shadow of things to come. But, the body is of Christ."\* In the gospel history we find, that, from the beginning, the Sabbath day was not observed, in any of the Gentile christian Churches; and, it is evident, that this could not have happened, without the approbation, or rather the express appointment, of the inspired apostles. Nor is it possible reasonably to conceive, that, if the observance of the Jewish Sabbath be still binding on the christian church, we should, among the innumerable exhortations and injunctions, on all other christian duties, which, in the gospel Scripture, are addressed to the churches, find no exhortation whatever, relative to this duty alone.

The Sabbath of the Mosaic dispensation was a positive, temporary, institution, which, although necessary to that dispensation, was, when it came to an end, by the same authority, that ordained it, discontinued;—an event, for which our Lord prepared those, who heard him, when he represented the institution of the Sabbath, in the same light, with that of the show-bread, in the temple, and declared that he himself was Lord of the Sabbath;—thus, clearly intimating, that he possessed authority to make, what

\* Col. ii. 16—17.



good use of it, he might please, and even wholly to abrogate it.

Since, under the gospel dispensation, it is, from the state of the world, and the constitution of human society, impossible strictly and literally to observe the Mosaic Sabbath, or day of entire cessation from labour and secular employment, it is evidently of the greatest importance, that all christians should be rightly informed, on the subject ; because, with the belief, that the observance of the Sabbath is binding on the christian church, the conscience of those, who observe it imperfectly,—and this must be the case of all, who now observe it, however earnestly,—cannot fail to be, in some measure, troubled and hurt ; and, with that belief, the conscience of those, who wholly neglect the observance of it, must be greatly defiled. “ For whatever is not of faith is sin.”

In the time of the apostles, we find, that the Gentile churches assembled, on the first day of the week, for the purpose of social worship, and, doubtless, also, in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord, on that day ; and, for this custom they must have had apostolic authority. From that, until the present, period, we know, that this day has been observed, for the same purposes, throughout the christian churches. It is, therefore, clearly the duty of all christians to observe the Lord’s day, with all possible attention and care, for those important purposes. Although the Mosaic Sabbath, or day of

entire cessation from our temporal cares and employments be, in cases innumerable, now, impracticable, it is unquestionably wise, and profitable, and necessary, that the Lord's day should be, as much as possible, occupied in religious exercises, both public and private, by every one, who is able to be so engaged. The observance of this day, and the due performance of the duties proper to it, are necessary, not only to a flourishing state, but even to the very existence, of religion, and, consequently, to the best interests of mankind, whether spiritual, or temporal ; while the neglect of it is powerfully and unavoidably productive of irreligion, and all manner of moral corruption, and, therefore, of present misery, and eternal perdition, to man.

To those, who, from defective knowledge, or from prejudice, believe, that the observance of the Mosaic Sabbath-day, in all its strictness, is binding on the christian church we must show all manner of indulgence and charity ; by avoiding, as much as possible, in word and deed, whatever might offend them, or prove a snare to their consciences. Otherwise, we disobey the apostolic exhortation, here given us.

On the broad foundation, laid by the apostle, in this epistle, of confessing, with the mouth, the Lord Jesus, and of believing, with the heart, that God raised him from the dead, let us receive every man, as truly a christian brother ; and let us neither harass, nor offend, him, by bitter and angry disputes,

about things of subordinate consideration. If, in other things, however important, he clearly appears to us to err, and, if we would use successful, and the only legitimate, means of reclaiming him, it is, by forbearance, by meekness of wisdom, and in charity, we must endeavour to do so. To his own master, he stands, or falls. Let us be chiefly concerned for the account, which we must, before the judgment-seat of Christ, render for ourselves.

Finally; to account for the indulgent strain, in which the apostle writes to the Roman christians, relative to those of them, who, in conformity to the Mosaic ritual, still made a distinction between meats and days, and the severe vituperation, with which he addresses the christians of Galatia, we must observe, that these were Gentile converts, who were in imminent danger of being made to believe, that they must still obtain justification of life, not simply by the redemption, that is in Christ, but, also, by the observance of the Mosaic ritual, and by receiving the distinctive rite of circumcision, which, as the apostle assured them, bound them to obey the whole law, in all its uncompromising demands, and mortal rigour, and that the weak brethren, in the church, in Rome, were Jewish christians, who, though still deficient, in their faith, rested their hopes of salvation and eternal life, on the obedience of Christ to death.

## LECTURE XVII.

## ROMANS, XV. 14—33.

IN the church of Christ, in Rome, it would appear, there were well qualified and able teachers, whose instructions and labours were crowned with general success. “I myself, also,” saith the apostle, “am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves, also, are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another.” But, this epistle containing, as it does, a most comprehensive view of the doctrines of the gospel, and many most important exhortations, relative to the christian life, and coming to that church with apostolic authority, was, in the highest degree, calculated to give still greater effect to the doctrine and exhortations of those teachers, to strengthen their hands, and to remove the prejudices of the weaker, and correct the errors of the less teachable, among them.

Thus, this epistle was calculated, not to give offence to the members of this church, whether Jews, or Gentiles, but greatly to kindle their gratitude to the eminent, and inspired writer of it. But, the

apostle deemed it fit, to apologize, for the freedom, which he used, in writing to them ; and, in doing so, his apology was such, that it could not fail to be sustained. In the commission, which this apostle had divinely received, he was commanded, first, to address the Jews ; but, in that commission, he was chiefly and especially appointed to open the eyes of the blinded Gentiles, to bring them to Christ, and on them, particularly, to bestow his labour. “ Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you, in some sort,”—that is, in reference to some of you,—in regard to the Gentile part of you,—“ as putting you in mind ; because of the grace,”—because of the apostolic office,—graciously “ given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified, by the Holy Ghost.” The apostle was appointed to minister, in the great, christian, spiritual, temple ; the offering, which he was to present, was the body of Gentile believers in Christ, and this offering,—this body,—in being presented, was manifestly consecrated, and rendered acceptable to God, by the gifts and powers, with which the Holy Spirit endowed it. And it is of the greatest importance, that it should be fully understood, and always borne in mind, that those miraculous, spiritual, gifts and powers, which, thus, consecrated the first fruits, consecrates, also, the mass. In the apostolic age,

they, who believed, that Jesus was the Son of God, and made open profession of their belief, received those gifts and powers, and were, thus, consecrated and sealed, to be the people of God, and heirs of eternal life. But, they received them, not merely for themselves, but, likewise, as the representatives of all, who should have the same belief and profession, in future ages, when, as we experience, it should seem good to the divine wisdom to withdraw them.

The apostle proceeds to show, that he had not been appointed an apostle, in vain. He declares, that, in bringing the Gentiles to Christ, the most signal success had crowned his exertions, and that the mighty hand of God manifestly and marvellously co-operated with him. “I have, then, wherewith I may glory, through Jesus Christ, in those things, which pertain to God ;” and my glorying is not, without just cause. I do not, with impious boldness, lay claim to success, with which my labours have *not* been attended. “For, I will not dare to speak of those things, which Christ hath *not* wrought by me.” I will speak only of those things, which he has actually and manifestly done by me ;—“to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed ; through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God. So that, from Jerusalem, round about, unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.” Now, the consideration of the great and universal success, which attended the labours of the apostle,—the fact, that, in

so many other parts of the empire, as well as in Rome, great multitudes had embraced the gospel, and that their conversion was effected, by the conviction produced, by the miraculous gifts and powers, with which this great apostle was endowed,—was powerfully calculated to make the doctrines and exhortations, contained in this epistle, to have their due effect on this church; and that it might produce that effect, was evidently the reason of his mentioning the fact, and the causes, of his great success, in bringing the Gentiles to Christ.

In the beginning of the epistle, the apostle solemnly and affectionately assures this church, that he had long and anxiously wished to visit them; and, here, he informs them of the cause, which had hitherto detained him. The cheering and life-giving light of the Sun of Righteousness had already, and for a considerable time, shone on the city of Rome; while many other populous and important cities and regions of the empire still remained in darkness and death; and to these cities and regions, the apostle, for the most obvious and weighty reasons, directed his steps, to convey to them the glad tidings and knowledge of salvation, by the Son of God. The time, which this necessarily occupied, had hitherto detained him, and was, to this church, a very valid apology, for the delay. “So have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named; lest I should build on another man’s foundation. But, as

it is written, To whom I was not spoken of, they shall see; and they, that have not heard, shall understand.\* For which cause, I have been much hindered," or, from this cause, chiefly, I have been detained, "from coming to you."

Having, thus, made a very sufficient apology to this church, for the delay, in visiting them, the apostle proceeds to tell them, that it was his intention, to see them soon; and, in words, which require no explanation, to inform them of the plan, which he had formed, for his journey. "But, now, having no more place, in these parts, and, having a great desire, these many years, to come unto you, whensoever I take my journey to Spain, I will come to you. For, I trust to see you, in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward, by you; if, first, I be somewhat filled, with your company. But, now, I go unto Jerusalem, to minister unto the saints. For, it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution, for the poor saints, which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them, verily; and their debtors they are. For, if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is, also to minister unto them, in carnal things. When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come, by you, into Spain. And I am sure, that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the

\* Is. lii. 15.



blessing of the gospel of Christ ;”—fully endowed, with the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, which accompany the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

In every city, the Holy Spirit intimated to the apostle, that, in preaching the gospel, bonds and afflictions awaited him ; and he had, already, but too ample experience of the hostility of the Jews, and especially of those at Jerusalem, to himself and to the great cause, in which he was engaged, not to fear the effects of that hostility, on the occasion of his intended visit to that city. He, therefore, now, implored the most earnest prayers of this church, to God, that he might be delivered from the hands of his unbelieving countrymen, in Judea. “ Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers, to God, for me ; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe, in Judea ; and that my service, which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints ; that I may come unto you, with joy, by the will of God, and may, with you, be refreshed. Now, the God of peace be with you, all ! Amen ! ”

In this portion of the epistle, some important, practical considerations present themselves to our attention. We learn, from it, that the teachers of the gospel should not fail, to bestow due praise on those, who, for their christian virtues, and their attainments, in christian knowledge, deserve it. It

suggests to us, that we are bound to praise and bless God, for raising up, in his church, so efficient and successful an instrument, as the apostle was, to bring us, formerly benighted and lost Gentiles, to the marvellous light of the gospel, and to the way of eternal life. It reminds us, that we ought fervently to bless God, for sanctifying and sealing, as his people, the first believers in Christ, and, with them, ourselves, by the clear and unquestionable gifts of the Holy Spirit. It teaches us the justice, and the duty, of showing kindness and liberality, in temporal things, to those, who minister to us, in spiritual things. It directs our thoughts to the evil nature and effects of blind prejudices, in religion, and warns us against harbouring them. On this occasion, however, we shall give our chief attention to the consideration of the clear and convincing evidence of the truth and divine origin of our holy religion, derived from the miraculous gifts and powers, with which the great apostle of the Gentiles was endowed, from his own personal qualities, and from the greatness, and success, of his labours, in the gospel.

In the outset, then, it must be observed, that the history and the epistles, which record the supernatural powers, with which the apostle was endowed, and the miracles, which he performed, are undeniably authentic. That is, they have unquestionably been written, by those persons, to whom they are ascribed, and on the occasions, on which they pur-


port to have been written. They possess every internal characteristic, and all the external evidence, of authenticity, which they could have possessed. The authenticity of no other writings, transmitted to us from antiquity, is established by evidence so clear and strong as that is, which establishes the canon of the New Testament.

The conversion itself of this apostle was attended, by the most strikingly miraculous circumstances. In Cyprus, Elymas, the sorcerer, was, by his means, instantaneously and miraculously, struck blind. At Lystra, a man cripple, from his birth, was instantaneously and miraculously restored, by him, to perfect soundness; and so clear and striking was this miracle, that, had not the apostle himself prevented it, the priest of Jupiter, with the people, would have offered a sacrifice to him, in the belief, that, in his person, a god had appeared on earth. At Philippi, he exorcised a damsel, possessed by a spirit of divination; and, in that city, while imprisoned, under circumstances of the strongest security, and of the strictest vigilance, by divine, and evidently miraculous, interposition, the earth shook, his fetters dropped off, and the doors of his prison were thrown open. At Ephesus, by imposition of his hands, spiritual, or miraculous, gifts and powers were imparted to the converts to Christ; and they spoke, in languages, with which, until then, they had been wholly unacquainted, and prophesied. In that city,

too, it is further recorded, " God wrought special miracles, by his hands ; so that, from his body, were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons ; and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them ;" and evil spirits, themselves, bore testimony to his supernatural power and divine mission. At Troas, Eutychus, who was taken up dead, was, by the apostle, restored to life. In Melita, to the utter astonishment of those, who looked on, but, in accordance to the prediction of our Lord, the venomous viper fell harmless from his hand, and they concluded, that he must be a god.

It was, in a divine vision, that the apostle was invited and directed to pass over to Europe, to preach the gospel. At Corinth, he was, in a vision, encouraged to persevere in the work of the ministry of the gospel. At Jerusalem, he was, in a miraculous trance, or vision, divinely commanded to quit that city, and to proceed, on his mission, to the Gentiles. Afterwards, too, while confined in the castle, in that city, the Lord stood by him, to assure him, that he should bear witness of him, at Rome, also ; and, while on his perilous voyage thither, the angel of the Lord stood by him, to assure him of safety.

This brief account of the spiritual powers and miracles of the apostle is derived from the sacred historian. He himself, in his epistles, relates another most interesting and glorious, divine, vision, which was granted to him ; and, in them, he informs us of



other spiritual, divine, communications, made to him. And, here, it may be observed, that, although any one may assert, that he has had supernatural visions, whether he has really had them, or not, the credibility of the divine visions, with which the apostle was favoured, is firmly established, by the manifold clear and undeniable miracles, which he performed. In his epistles, besides, the apostle has many direct affirmations, relative to the supernatural, spiritual, gifts and powers, with which he himself was endowed, and which he imparted to others, and to the manifold miracles, which he wrought. For, example, besides his affirmation, in this epistle, relative to those gifts and powers, in one epistle, he reminds the Corinthians, that the gospel came to them, not in word only, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power,—by the uncontrovertible evidence of spiritual gifts and powers, and of miracles,—and, in another, that the signs, or proofs, of his apostleship, or divine mission, were amply afforded them, in the manifold mighty works, which he so clearly, and during so long a space of time, performed among them. His allusions to the supernatural gifts, with which he himself was endowed, and which he imparted to others, and to the miracles, which he performed, are without number.

Now, the affirmations and allusions of the apostle, in his letters, relative to his gifts and miracles, clearly prove, that he really possessed those gifts, and that

he had really performed those miracles. For, were he not endowed with those gifts, and had he not wrought those miracles, to have made either affirmations, or allusions, relative to them, instead of confirming those, to whom his epistles were written, in the faith of the gospel, would inevitably have incurred their ridicule and contempt.

The apostle was not himself deceived, in regard to the great cause, in which he was engaged. All that we learn, concerning this most distinguished man, in the sacred history, and all that he himself has written, in his epistles, clearly show, that he possessed a most powerful understanding, and talents of the first order. From imbecility, therefore, he could not have believed those things, which he taught, if they had not been true, or those, which he affirmed, unless they had been real. Nor could a blind enthusiasm, or fanaticism, have deceived him. It is, by prejudices, or prepossessions, that the passions are excited, which drive enthusiasts and fanatics to those extravagant and frantic errors, and to those enormities of conduct, which characterise them. But, on his conversion to Christ, the apostle became engaged, in establishing and propagating a faith, which formerly he used all his influence and efforts utterly to destroy. Whatever degree, therefore, of inconsiderate and impetuous zeal may have existed in the apostle before his conversion,—and unquestionably that degree was not small,—it only proves, that the

change in his mind and life must have been produced, by a signal, divine, interposition. It is, besides, altogether evident, that no degree of enthusiasm, or fanaticism,—that, indeed, nothing short of a total, physical, aberration of mind,—could have made the apostle to believe, either that he himself possessed those spiritual gifts, with which himself, in his epistles, affirms, he was endowed, and which sacred history ascribes to him, or that he had performed all those miracles, which, from Jerusalem, round about, to Illyricum, he is said to have wrought, if he did not really possess those gifts, and if he had not actually performed those miracles. But, supposing, that he himself might have been, deceived, it was not possible, that any delusion, in him, could, also, have so deluded the churches, which he converted and formed, in all that most extensive territory, as to cause them to believe in the reality of those gifts and miracles, if they were not real,—nay, clearly and undeniably real;—that is, if the gospel were not true, and a divine revelation.

No man would have engaged, in such labours, as those of the apostle, without a motive,—without, indeed, a very strong motive. What, then, could have been the motive, that actuated him? It was not the desire of honour, or of fame. The rulers and other great men, and the generality of his countrymen, the Jews, hated and despised Christ, and his gospel; and the Gentiles, especially the great and

the learned, among them, regarded and treated the gospel, as foolishness. Neither among the Jews, therefore, nor among the Gentiles, could the apostle expect to acquire honour, or fame, by propagating the gospel. It could not have been the desire of affluence, that urged him. Because, for the sake of Christ, and his gospel, he willingly and cheerfully suffered the loss of all things. It was not, in pursuit of ease, or of any other personal gratification. For, in his apostolic labours, instead of securing these temporal advantages, so great and so constant were his dangers, hardships, and sufferings, that were he not supported, by the glorious prospects of eternal life and happiness, in a future state, he would have been, of all men, the most miserable. For the purity, integrity, disinterestedness, dangers, hardships, and sufferings, of his life, he constantly appeals to the churches, in his own epistles ; and, it is evident, that no such appeals would have been made, unless there were real grounds for them. No other motive, therefore, could the apostle have had, for preaching and propagating the gospel, than the truth of it, and the reality of his own divine mission, for that purpose.

The spiritual gifts, with which the apostle was endowed, and the miracles of every kind, which he performed, were, in their nature, all unequivocal, clear, and undeniable. Accordingly, the unbelieving Gentiles absurdly ascribed them to the power of



magic, and the unbelieving Jews, wickedly, to that of demons. The immediate effects, too, of the miracles, wrought by the apostle, like those of the mighty works, performed by all his fellow-apostles, and by our Lord himself, were, in every case, most beneficent, in their nature ; and the eternal ends, to which his gifts and miracles were subservient, are great and important, beyond conception ;—a consideration, in the highest degree, calculated to confirm us, in the belief, that those gifts and miracles were real, and that the power, from which they proceeded was divine.

The miracles performed, by the apostle, besides, were not wrought, either under any circumstances of concealment, or obscurity, or among a people, who, from barbarism and ignorance, were unable to distinguish between miracles and the ordinary operations of nature. They were performed openly, before the world. They were wrought publicly, in the light of day, in the most populous and celebrated cities, in the world,—inviting, and doubtless incurring, the scrutiny of men of science and learning, who were well able to judge of their claim to reality, and who, had they been false, easily could, and readily would, have exposed the imposture.

If, then, we consider the mighty obstacles, which the apostle had to surmount, and the very great and numberless difficulties, which he had to encounter, in converting the Gentiles to the faith of the gospel,—

if we duly reflect on the power of the civil authorities, ever ready to be used, in defence and support of the religion of the state, however false, or corrupt,—on the zealous and unscrupulous aid, which an interested and crafty priesthood lends to that power, in preventing any change, in the prevailing system of superstition, and especially in preserving that system from destruction,—and on the blind and bloody fanaticism, with which the infuriated multitude defend any system of superstition, however monstrous, in which they may have been brought up, when it is attacked,—and if, in making these reflections, we also consider the great and wonderful success, which crowned the labours of the apostle, in bringing so great numbers of men, of every description, from Gentile darkness, to the glorious light of the gospel,—we can come to no other conclusion than this ;—that the great apostle of the Gentiles did, in reality, possess the miraculous gifts and powers, and did, indeed, work those miracles, which are, in the Scriptures, ascribed to him ; and that a deep and thorough conviction of this, was the cause of the conversion of those, whom he brought to the faith of the gospel.

In the estimation of the most competent judges, the argument arising from the spiritual endowments, miracles, and life, of this apostle, appears so clear, strong, and convincing, that, of itself alone, it forms an irresistible proof of the truth, and divine origin

of the gospel ; \* and, if it do, how much more powerful and convincing is it, when considered, in connexion with the evidence afforded, by the miracles, doctrine, and life, of our Lord himself, and of his other apostles and evangelists, and as forming a part of the grand, general, dispensation of revealed religion, which, in its origin, progress, and completion, has so manifestly been the effect of divine, miraculous, interposition.

What a cheering consideration, then, is it, and what cause of unceasing thankfulness to God, not only that we have the firmest possible foundation for our faith, in the truth and reality of our holy religion, as that religion is contained in the divine oracles, but that, if we live to the Lord Jesus, we have the most rational and solid grounds for our expectation of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace !

\* See the most able and admirable letter of George Lord Lyttleton, to Gilbert West, Esquire, in which his Lordship shows, that the conversion, miracles, and life of the apostle Paul, do, of themselves alone, sufficiently and clearly demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion.

## LECTURE XVIII.

## ROMANS, XVI.

HAVING finished his epistle, with the usual signature and benediction, with his own hand, the apostle, probably at short intervals of time, added to it two post-scripts, and finally a most solemn doxology to God ; and these we are now about to consider.

In his apostolical journeys and ministrations, the apostle became, either officially connected, or well acquainted, with a number of christians, who, when this epistle was written, were at Rome. To these christians, then, he now sends his salutations ;—salutations, which are manifestly the expression of the most ardent christian love, and of the sincerest, most disinterested, and most exalted, love and friendship, which are well fitted to convince us, that this truly illustrious apostle, and good man, felt the power of the doctrines, which he taught, and cherished and carefully cultivated those heavenly affections, which he so strongly and constantly recommended to others, and which, therefore, invite and deserve the deep attention of every christian.

“ I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church, which is at Cenchrea.” This Phebe, who, as we are led to infer from the word, by which her office is designated in the original, and from the character here given of her, was a person, who discharged the duties of a deaconess, in the church at Cenchrea ;—duties, it is probable, which were partly spiritual and partly secular, and which peculiar circumstances, then, rendered necessary. “ That,” continues the apostle, “ ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her, in whatsoever business she hath need of you. For she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” Thus, Phebe is recommended, by the apostle, as a true christian sister, and a person of great and general beneficence, to the Roman christians, who are requested to succour her, in transacting the business, which brought her to Rome, and which appears to have been of a secular nature. Thus, too, we are here reminded, that a due portion of our time, attention, and labour, is divinely permitted to be given to our temporal affairs ; and we are enjoined to give to good and beneficent christian strangers a cordial and becoming reception, and, in particular, to use our best services, in promoting their temporal interests.

Aquila was a Jew, a native of Pontus, who, with all other Jews, was, by an edict of the Emperor Claudius, banished from Rome, and came, accompanied by his wife, Priscilla, or Prisca, to Corinth. Here

the apostle found Aquila and Priscilla, who appear to have already embraced the gospel; and the apostle, for important reasons, which he gives in other epistles, wrought with them, to earn his daily bread, in the occupation of tent-making. For, the apostle, like many other persons of liberal education and higher prospects, in those times, had learned a handicraft. From the additional instructions, given by Aquila and Priscilla to Apollos,—himself a man mighty in the scriptures,—they were evidently well versed in the doctrines of the gospel; and they greatly aided the apostle, in the ministry of the word of life.\* We find, they were afterwards with the apostle, at Ephesus; and here we learn, they had returned to Rome. The apostle himself further informs us, that, on one occasion, on which his life was in the most imminent danger, these worthy persons generously and magnanimously saved it, at the risk of losing their own. This, therefore, not only laid himself under the strongest obligations of gratitude to them, but likewise the whole Gentile christian world, and was worthy, not only of the warmest and most marked acknowledgement in this epistle, but also of having a place in the sacred volume, to excite the admiration and imitation of future generations. “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ, who have, for my life, laid down their own necks; unto whom, not only I give thanks, but also all the

\* Acts, xviii. 2, 3.

churches of the Gentiles." This salutation was greatly and most deservedly calculated to raise Aquila and Priscilla in the estimation of the Roman christians ; and that end, doubtless, the apostle intended it should serve.

Of the family, also, or domestics, of Aquila and Priscilla some, if not all, had been converted to Christ ; and to these, likewise, the apostle, designating them, " the church, that was in their house," sends his salutations.


" Salute," continues the apostle, " my beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia \* to Christ." Of this expression of love and esteem this distinguished christian was, in the highest degree, worthy. To have been the first person in this extensive province, to renounce the ingenious, accommodating, splendid, and attractive, religion, during so many ages, established, in that celebrated region, as elsewhere, and, thus, to declare it to be, but a cunningly devised, and most corrupting, fable, to have incurred the displeasure, reproach, and ridicule, not only of his countrymen, but of his nearest relatives, and dearest friends, to have, perhaps, sacrificed great worldly interests, and many temporal gratifications, to have embraced a religion so new and uncommon, and so subversive of that of his country, and, therefore, so dangerous to his own personal safety, to have

\* Or " of Asia," as many read. But, in that case, too, the same observations are fully applicable.

listened only to the voice of reason, truth, and conviction, and obeyed that voice alone, and to have led the way, in the glorious, but perilous, cause of the gospel, most clearly shows, that Epenetus was a man worthy not only of the apostolic salutation, but also of the notice, which he has obtained, in the sacred record, and of being, thus for ever an object of admiration to all the christian world.

The apostle desires his salutation to "Mary;" and she, too, deserved, not only that mark of esteem, from him, but, also, the grateful remembrance of the whole Gentile, christian, world. For, here, we learn, that she laboured much, for the benefit of the apostle, and his fellow-labourers, in the gospel.

He salutes "Andronicus and Junia;" whom he mentions, as his "kinsmen;" to remind them and his other christian kinsmen, that, although he had, in this epistle, spoken of his kinsmen, the Jews, in general, in terms of severity, it was from no ill-will, but from love and necessity. He, further, observes, that Andronicus and Junia were, on some occasion, not specified, his fellow-prisoners;—a fact, which redounded greatly to their praise. And, for this, and, doubtless, for their excellent christian qualities, "they were of note among the apostles." Nor could the apostle, in great humility and kindness, omit adding, that "they were in Christ before himself;"—that is, while, in blind and headlong zeal, he was





persecuting the Lord from heaven, and making havoc of his church.

Besides these excellent christians, the apostle salutes many more; either coupling their names with some endearing, or honourable, epithet, or adding some expression of commendation, especially to the names of those, who assisted in the ministry of the gospel. “Greet Amplias, my beloved, in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper, in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. Salute Apelles, approved in the Lord.” Apelles, we may hence justly infer, had clearly shown the sincerity and firmness of his faith, and his other excellent Christian qualities, under circumstances, which put those qualities greatly to the test. “Salute them, which are of Aristobulus’ household. Salute Herodian, my kinsman. Greet them, that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus, chosen,\*

\* The word, in the original, is, *elect*, which, in reference, both to men and things, often means excellent, in their nature, or kind. Thus; we read of the inhabitants of Gibeah, who were numbered seven hundred *elect*, or chosen, men. Judges xx. 15. In the wilderness, the wrath of God came upon Israel, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the *elect*, or chosen, men of them. Psal. lxxviii. 31. The children of Heth desired Abraham to bury his dead, in the *elect*, or choice, of their sepulchres. Gen. xx. 15. The children of Israel were commanded to bring to the Lord, in the place which he should select for his name, “their *elect*, or choice, vows,” or gifts. Deut. xii. 11. The king of Assyria came to the sides of Lebanon to cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the *elect*, or choice, fir-trees thereof.

in the Lord ;”—that is, a man of excellent and shining christian qualities ;—“ and his mother and mine.” The mother of Rufus, in her kindness to the apostle, acted towards him, also, the part of a mother. “ Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren, which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints,” or christians, “ which are with them.”

These salutations and commendations were highly calculated to encourage, in the Lord, those to whom they were sent, and to induce them to persevere in every thing becoming their christian profession ; and, coming, from an apostle, who knew them, and who was endowed with so much discernment, both spiritual and natural, the commendations must have been well deserved, and justly due. The example of the apostle, then, teaches all christian pastors to encourage those of their flocks, who are eminent for their christian works and virtues, by special attention, and affectionate praises.

“ Salute,” continues the apostle, “ one another, with an holy kiss.” This manner of salutation was, in those times, customary ; and, here, we find it

2 Kings xix. 23. The good kine, seen by Pharaoh, in his dream, are termed *elect*, or “ fat-fleshed.” Gen. xli. 2. And the good ears of corn, seen by him, are also denominated *elect*, or “ rank.” V. 5. This is the language of the Septuagint version, and throws light on several passages of the New Testament, in which the word, *elect*, is used, and which, from inattention to the true meaning of that word, is not unfrequently misunderstood.


sanctioned, in the christian church, by the apostle, who enjoins it to be observed, in all sanctity, as well as with all kindness. But, in all probability, his sanction was given, only because it was an expression of friendship and kindness, then, in general use; and we cannot, therefore, infer the obligation of the observance of it, in christian communities, whose custom is different. The chief object, perhaps, though but implied, which the apostle had in view, in the injunction, was, still further, to inculcate unmingled mutual brotherly kindness and love between the Jewish and Gentile members of this church.

“The churches of Christ salute you.” The smallness of the number of those, who, in the apostolic age, believed, and who, in obedience to their conviction, dared, in the midst of an unbelieving world, to profess their belief, was, itself, a great cause of discouragement to them. This expression, then, of brotherly kindness and respect, from the churches of Christ, in Achaia, converted, as they had been, by the ministry of the apostle himself, and greatly abounding in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to a church, that, hitherto, had not had the benefit of the personal ministry of an apostle, and, probably, not so plentifully possessing those gifts, must have been peculiarly encouraging, gratifying, and useful; as it virtually was a public and solemn acknowledgment of them, as true brethren, in Christ.

But, the apostle knew, that, in this, as well as in

the other Gentile churches, there were Judaizing teachers, whose doctrines tended, either wholly to overturn, or, at least, greatly to corrupt, the doctrines of the gospel, to create dissensions and divisions among them, and, thus, to endanger the faith, practice, and salvation of the weak and unwary. Against these teachers, then, the apostle, here, earnestly and solemnly warns this church, and exhorts them to shun them. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them, which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine, which ye have learned ; and avoid them." He, then, doubtless from a thorough knowledge of the principles and conduct of those deceivers, tells the church the unholy motives, which actuated them, and the base and hypocritical means, of which they made use, to accomplish their evil purposes. "For, they, that are such, serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and, by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." The judaizing teachers, by flattering words and specious arguments, confirmed those, whom they deceived, in their prejudices, in favour of the necessity of the observance of the Mosaic law, in order to salvation, and, perhaps, countenanced, in them, laxity of morals. This necessarily led to a separation in worship, and to a choice of teachers, who, it would appear, greedily, cunningly, and busily, turned prejudice, error, dissension, and evil, to unhallowed gain.

This exhortation, however, was given, not because




this church was peculiarly conspicuous, for being deficient and disorderly. For, with much satisfaction, the apostle had, in this epistle, already expressed his conviction, that they were filled with all knowledge and goodness, and able to admonish one another ; and here again, with equal satisfaction, he affirms, that their conversion and obedience to the gospel was a fact universally known. It was for their very excellency, and from a desire of confirming them, in their faith and good conduct, and of preserving them, by his apostolic authority and exhortation, from an evil, from which he knew, all the Gentile churches stood in danger, and from which, it would appear, even this church had not wholly escaped. “ For, your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad, therefore, in your behalf. But, yet, I would have you wise unto that, which is good, and simple concerning evil.”

Here, the apostle consoles this church, with the near prospect of deliverance, from the trial, danger, and evil, which arose from judaizing teachers, in the church, and from the severe and constant persecutions of the Jews, in general. The time foretold by our Lord himself, and prophetically known to the apostle, when the polity of the Jewish nation should be for ever destroyed, and when that nation should no longer possess any power, or authority to injure the church of Christ, or to prevent its growth, was now at hand. “ The God of peace shall bruise

Satan," that is, the adversary, "under your feet shortly."

To attest the authenticity of this postscript,—to certify, that it, as well as the rest of the epistle, was, indeed, from himself,—the apostle subjoins, and writes, with his own hand, the sign of authenticity, in all his epistles,—the usual solemn and impressive benediction. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

In the first postscript, the apostle sends the salutations of the churches of Achaia to this church,—an expression and pledge of paternal love, which could not fail greatly to gratify them, and to encourage them, in the Lord. In a second postscript he sends them the salutations of eminent and excellent individuals, which, also, were much calculated to have the same happy effect. "Timotheus, my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you." These salutations are a virtual and full declaration of agreement, with the apostle, in whatever he writes in the epistle, and, coming from a fellow-labourer, who was so eminently endowed, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and from other Jewish christian brethren of merited celebrity, in the general church, they could not fail greatly to add to the authority of the doctrines of the apostle, and to the force of his exhortations, to the members of this church, whether Jews, or Gentiles. Nor could the salutations, which follow, fail to have a very be-



neficial effect, on this church. “ I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle,”—who wrote this epistle, from the dictation of the apostle,—“ salute you, in the Lord. Gaius, mine host, and of the whole church ;”—that is, Gaius, with whom I lodge, a man of general beneficence to the church,—“ saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus, a brother.” These, it may justly be inferred, were persons of wealth, intelligence, education, and distinction ; and, since from various powerful and fatal, worldly, causes, there had been, hitherto, among the Gentiles, but comparatively few such converted to Christ, it could not fail to be highly gratifying and encouraging to this church, that every where there were *some* ;—some, who, having more worldly good than others, either to endanger, or perhaps to lose, and who, from their eminent station, and extensive influence, in society, were in peculiar danger, from the vigilance and power of the civil authorities, the jealous guardians of the established superstition, clearly showed, that they accounted all things but loss, in comparison with the knowledge of Christ crucified, and the salvation, which he has effected.

To this postscript, also, the apostle appends the usual attestation of authenticity. “ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen !”

These postscripts, and the whole of this invaluable epistle, the apostle concludes, with a most solemn


and ardently devout doxology to God. "Now, to him, that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret, since the world began, but now is made manifest, and, by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith;—to God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen!" Even in this doxology, we see, the apostle could not refrain from reminding this church, once more, of the unspeakably precious doctrines, contained in this epistle. Once more, he calls their attention to "his gospel;"—to the joyful tidings, which he was divinely sent and accredited to communicate to the world. Once more, he brings to their view "the preaching," or doctrine, "of Christ;"—the doctrine, that he was the Son of God, and that he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification;—thus abolishing death, and bringing to the clearest light life and immortality. Once more, he reminds them of the revelation of the mystery, which, in past ages, was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed,—that mystery, which is now made manifest, by the fulfilment of the prophetic scriptures, as well as by "the demonstration of the spirit;"—that inestimable and glorious mystery, which reveals to us, that the Gentiles are now invited and received into the church and king-



dom of God, and made heirs of eternal life, not by submitting to the yoke of the Mosaic law, but simply and purely by faith in Christ, and free justification, by the grace, or great and unmerited goodness, of God. Once more, he declares to them, that this ineffably precious mystery is, by the commandment of the eternal God, made known to all nations ;—made known to them, that they might believe and obey what it reveals, and, thus, finally come to the possession and enjoyment of eternal life, glory, honour, and peace.

How fervently and unceasingly thankful, then, ought we, whose Gentile fathers were wholly ignorant of this mystery, to be, that we have it revealed to us, that, instead of worshipping, as they did, stocks and stones, and of being, as they were, without hope, and without God, in the world, we are brought to the knowledge of the living and true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, and to the well-founded prospect of a glorious life and immortality, that we are not, as they were, strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth of the people of God, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of his household, that we are delivered from the power of Satan, by whom they were held in degrading bondage, and brought to the glorious kingdom and service of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, and that, instead of groping in the thick spiritual darkness, in which they were involved, we behold the marvellous

and joyful light of the Sun of Righteousness! How careful ought we to be, that, from evil deeds, we may not love darkness more than the light, which now so gloriously shines! How anxious ought we to be, not to neglect the great salvation, that is so fully within our reach! How can we escape a fearful retribution, if we either despise, or neglect it? How careful ought we to be, lest, having a divine promise of entering into the rest of the people of God, we may not, from sin and unbelief, come short of that rest! What can we expect but condign punishment, if we hide in the earth the talents, committed to our charge? How industriously ought we to make a suitable use of those talents; that we may obtain the rich and glorious reward of our diligence! How perseveringly and ardently ought we to press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ,—the crown of life and righteousness! We have, not only every motive, but every encouragement, to embrace the salvation of God, and to work out that salvation, for ourselves. By the commandment of God himself, it is brought to all nations, that they may accept and obey it; and any individual, of any nation, to whom the great and glorious mystery of godliness is made known, is, not only permitted, but invited, entreated, and commanded, to accept it, that, in rendering obedience to its requirements, he may receive the present and eternal benefit of it. For, Christ gave himself a ransom for



all ; and God would have all men, through him, to be saved.—Then, to God our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through grace, and who is able to establish us, in every good word and work ;—to him, that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy ;—to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, both now and for ever. Amen !

THE END.









